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MARCH, 1921 VOL. LIII, NO. 1

THE BOOKMAN

THE ELDER CRITIC AND THE YOUNG ENTHUSIAST

By Heywood Broun

IT was a child in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale who finally told the truth by crying out, "He hasn't got anything on", as the king marched through the streets clad only in the magic cloth woven and cut by the swindling tailor. You may remember that everybody else kept silent because the tailor had given out that the cloth was visible to all except such as were unworthy of their position in life. The child knew nothing of this and anyway he didn't have any position in life, so he piped up and cried, "He hasn't got anything on". And though he was but a child others took up the cry, and finally even the king was convinced and ran to get his bathrobe. The tailor, as we remember the story, was executed.

In course of time that child grew up, and married, and died leaving heirs behind him. And they in turn were not barren, so that today vast numbers of his descendants are in the world. Nearly all of them are critics of one sort or another, but mostly young critics. Like their great ancestor they are all frank and shrill, and either valiant or foolhardy as you choose to look at it. Certainly they seldom hesitate to rush in. No, there is no doubt at all that they are just a wee bit hasty, these descendants of the child. It is rather useful that every now and then one of them should point a finger of scorn at some falsely great figure in the arts and cry out his nakedness at top voice. But sometimes they make mistakes. It has happened not infrequently that worthy and respectable artists and authors in great coats, close-fitting sack suits, and heavy woolen underwear, have been greeted by some member of the clan with the traditional cry, "He hasn't got anything on".

This may be embarrassing as well as unfair. Ever since the child scored his sensational critical success so many years ago, all his sons have been eager to do likewise. They have in-

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herited an extraordinary suspicion regarding the raiment of all great men. Even when they are forced to admit that some particular king is actually clad in substantial achievement of one sort or another, they are still apt to carp about the fit and cut of his clothing. Almost always they maintain that he borrowed his shoes from someone else and that he cannot fill them.

In regard to humbler citizens they are apt to carry charity to great lengths. In addition to the incident recorded by Andersen they cherish another legend about the child. According to the tradition, he wrote a will just before he died in which he said, "Thank heaven I leave not a single adjective to any of my descendants. I have spent them all."

The clan is notoriously extravagant. They live for all the world like Bedouins of the Sahara without thought of the possibility of a rainy day. Their gaudiest years come early in life. Middle age and beyond is apt to be tragic. Almost nothing in the experience of mankind is quite so heartrending as the spectacle of one of these young critics, grown grey, coming face to face in his declining years with a masterpiece. At such times he is apt to be seized with a tremor and stricken dumb. Undoubtedly he is tormented with the memory of all the adjectives which he flung away in his youth. They are gone beyond recall. He fumbles in his purse and finds nothing except small change worn smooth. The best he can do is to fling out a "highly creditable piece of work" and go on his way.

Still he has had fun for his adjectives for all that. There is a compensating glow in the heart of the young critic when he remembers the day an obscure author came to him asking bread, though rather expecting a stone, and he with a flourish reached down into the breadbox and gave the poor man layer cake.

"After all," one of the young critics told me in justifying his mode of life, "it may be just as tragic as you say to be caught late in life with a masterpiece in front of you and not a single adequate adjective left in your purse. Yes, I'll grant you that it's unfortunate. But there's still another contingency which I mean to avoid. Wouldn't it be a rotten sell to die with half your adjectives still unused? You know you can't take them with you to heaven. Of what possible use would they be up there? Even the bravest superlatives would seem pretty mean and petty in that land. Think of being blessed with milk and honey for the first time and trying to express your gratitude and wonder with, 'The best I ever tasted'. No sir. I'm going to be ready for the new eternal words by using up all the old ones before I die."

Of course, it will be well before going any further to point out that generally speaking a young critic remains that way no matter what his age. In the field of music, for instance, nobody is younger than James Gibbons Huneker. After twenty or thirty years of musical criticism a great many men have the entire field divided into so many cubbyholes. If a new piece of music appears which does not fit into any of these it is promptly thrown away as worthless. There is much to be said for the value of traditions, though not by the writer of this particular article. He feels too keenly what seems to him the tyranny which tradition has held over the English theatre. Shakespeare almost ruined the stage for all the men who came after him by not only looming head and shoulders over anybody else

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who had ever lived, but by being too high even for all the succeeding generations to shoot at. He spoiled the game of speculating as to when and how the great English drama would be written by writing it, not once but dozens of times.

There followed centuries well down into our own day, when every playwright who came along was required to climb up and over Shakespeare before anybody was willing to speak enthusiastically about him. Of course nobody did, and for years there wasn't any enthusiasm about playwrights. It was all reserved for actors who played in Shakespearian revivals. No dead American playwright begins to be as well known as Edwin Booth. This is a sad state of affairs. Actors belong in the theatre only at the special invitation of playwrights; and here is one capturing the entire enthusiasm of one branch of American criticism for a quarter of a century.

Not only did the tradition of Shakespeare terrify English and American dramatists for hundreds of years, but it insured a cool reception to the great dramatists of other lands when they were introduced to us in translation. William Winter, the foremost American dramatic critic of his day, upbraided Mansfield for playing "Cyrano", and the actor replied humbly enough that he knew it was a potboiler but he was merely trying to get a little money together in order to do another Shakespearian revival. And of course Ibsen and Shaw drove Winter into perfect tirades of fury. James Gibbons Huneker was one of the young critics who brought the attention of America to Ibsen and to Shaw. It is true that he did not have the affrontery to point at Shakespeare and shout, "He hasn't got anything on", but he did the next best thing and pretended not to see him.

Fortunately for the American novel there is nobody with whom the younger generation can be clubbed into submission, and yet a few small gods and petty tyrants have been established. These have not been individuals so much as theories of life. Political and moral considerations have entered into American literary criticism to an amazing extent. Today a number of novelists are judged not so much on the basis of their style but rather more on their apparent attitude toward Soviet Russia. Not in the course of three years has the same book been praised by "The Liberator" and the New York "Times". The strongest set feeling against which the younger novelists have to contend, is American pride and satisfaction in rural life. This does not mean that any great number of Americans want to live in rural communities; but a great many do, and in order to flatter and compensate these an enormous literary bulwark has been built up to protect the conception that the home life in American small towns is the most perfect in all the world. It was hard to persuade the small town man of this because he was living the life; but after all what were his own petty misgivings against the voice of "The Saturday Evening Post" and "The American Magazine"? He was won over, although even today it may not be quite safe to offer him a job in New York or Chicago.

The big cities were easy. Urban folk felt that rural and small town life as pictured in the magazines was not just what they wanted for themselves —not right away at any rate—but that it was the sort of thing which one ought to like as an ideal. Most New Yorkers will tell you that they hope

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some day or other to save up enough money to buy a farm and settle down upon it. The fact that they do nothing of the sort is not relevant.

Of course, there have been sporadic attacks from time to time against the assumption of the perfection of pastoral life in America, but the big push has begun only within the last year. It has been terrific in its concentration, and the writers who have led the attack are Sinclair Lewis with "Main Street", Zona Gale with "Miss Lulu Bett", Floyd Dell with "Moon-Calf", and Sherwood Anderson with "Poor White". These have been the directors of action in the field, but back at headquarters is a man who has had more to do with seizing the offensive against Puritanism than any of them. Naturally we mean H. L. Mencken. Most Americans who dislike Puritanism have been content to remain on the defensive, but not so with Mencken. When prohibition was first advanced he suggested no compromise but called instead for more rum. His answer to the plea for a blue Sunday is an impassioned appeal for a purple one. In and out of season he has been shouting, "He hasn't got anything on", at every consciously respectable figure in American letters. Naturally, he has not played scrupulously fair, but he has been a fine fighter. Even though one agrees with few of his ideas about life or literature, he must applaud the effect he has had on American writers. He has brought controversy and bitterness into literature and made it exciting and worth while. Only out of the vigorous clash of opinion can the great American novel come, or even the pretty good American novel. William Allen White was praising "Main Street" the other day and at length he remarked, "Of course, I'm on the other side of the street myself but that's just the reason why I like this book. It gives us fellows something to answer."

HIKER AT MIDNIGHT

By Carl Sandburg

MEMORIES, you can flick me and sting me.
Memories, you can hold me even and smooth.

A circle of pearl mist horizons
is not a woman to be walked up to and kissed
nor a child to be taken and held for a good-night,
nor any old coffee-drinking pal to be smiled at in
the eyes and left with a grip and a handshake.

Pearl memories in the mist circling the horizon,
flick me, sting me, hold me even and smooth.

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THE WORLD'S MOST CURIOUS BOOKS

By Walter Hart Blumenthal

BLINDFOLD a confirmed librarian or bookworm and he will tell you a surprising deal about a book merely by the heft and feel of it. Not just a matter of weight or bulk or texture—the arcana of the initiated plumb deeper. The master book-knower—a Putnam, Winsor or Paltsits, a Garnett, Pollard or Gosse—can almost appraise a tome in the dark and tell you it is of low degree and doubtless dross, or caress an élite duodecimo and call it more than treasure. Indeed, he will frequently be able to tell the approximate decade of its publication by touch, smell, the crackle of its leaves, and characteristics of its very edges. This talent is as esoteric as Hindu levitation and certainly more dependable than professional weather forecasting!

A HORN-BOOK OR ABECEDARIUM

Aside from a person's apparel, his face, figure, bearing, gait, and other outward tokens reveal much of the man within. To the keen observer the hands alone are often a confession or a credential. So the chronic reader comes to know and judge books by a sort of trained intuition before he has glanced at the title-page. The outward signs of a ribbed back or a silk head-band bespeak quality as readily as do immaculate and tapering fingers.

Somewhere there is a tawny volume bound in Bengal tiger, with a white feline fang protruding from each corner. It came from a noted French collection of fantastic bindings dispersed at auction in 1874. There were books in this library in the skins of crocodile, mole, seal, civet, lizard, and rattlesnake. There were volumes bound in Canadian black wolf, otter, and white bear. There were specimens in feather work, and in tortoise shell inlaid with mother of pearl and silver. Strangest of all was an angling book bound in the shellacked scaly mail of a sole.

General Sir George Napier had a work clothed in a piece of Charles the First's silk waistcoat. It was a life of the celebrated dwarf, Jeffery Hudson, who measured 18 inches, fought a duel with a turkey-cock, and at a royal banquet was brought to table in a make-believe pie.

More than once have books been bound in human skin. A Russian poet is said to have presented to the lady of his affections a collection of his sonnets bound in his own integument. The astronomer Flammarion having

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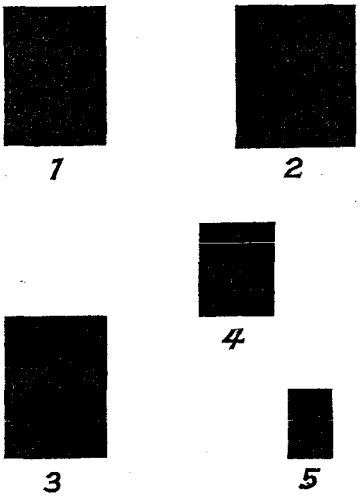
admired the exquisite skin of a beautiful lady of title whom he met at a reception, she bequeathed it to him. When she died he received a square of



SMALLEST BOOKS IN THE WORLD

1. Bijou Almanack (¾x½)
2. The Mite (¾x⅝)
3. Alarm Almanac (23-32x9-16)
4. The Court of Flowers (15-32x⅜)
5. Galileo's Letter (23-64x15-64)

tissue and, in accordance with instructions accompanying the legacy, had a copy of his own work "Ciel et Terre" bound therein.

There is one erratic book collector whose every accession is uniformly rebound in red morocco before being put on his shelves. This was once commonly done by the nobility, whose armorial bearings were emblazoned on their books as on their coaches. Each of the three daughters of Louis the Fifteenth had her own library. Madame Adelaide had all her books bound in maroon morocco. Madame Sophie's were in citron; Madam Victoire preferred Nile green.

An extraordinary volume which long belonged to the family of the Prince de Ligne is by some esteemed the most curious book in the world because it is neither written nor printed. The letters of the text are cut out line by line and page by page from the vellum folio. Being interleaved with tinted paper, it is easily read.

The above volume is perhaps outdone in strangeness by a Wordless Book which except for the title-page contains not one syllable. It was devised by a person of strong religious bent who thought to convey an allegory in the color scheme of its leaves, of which two are black, two crimson, two white, and two gold. The black symbolizes the unregenerate heart of man; the crimson, the divine redemption; the white, the purity of the soul "washed in the blood of the Lamb"; the gold, the felicity of eternal beatitude.

Wilkes's "Essay on Woman", 1772, is printed throughout in red ink. The "Book of Four Colours", by one Caracicoli, was issued at Paris in 1757 in gamboge, ultramarine, sepia, and vermilion inks. To test the legibility of colored paper and ink, the mathematical tables devised by Babbage were printed in twenty-one volumes at Lon-

A FIG FOR LEARNING!

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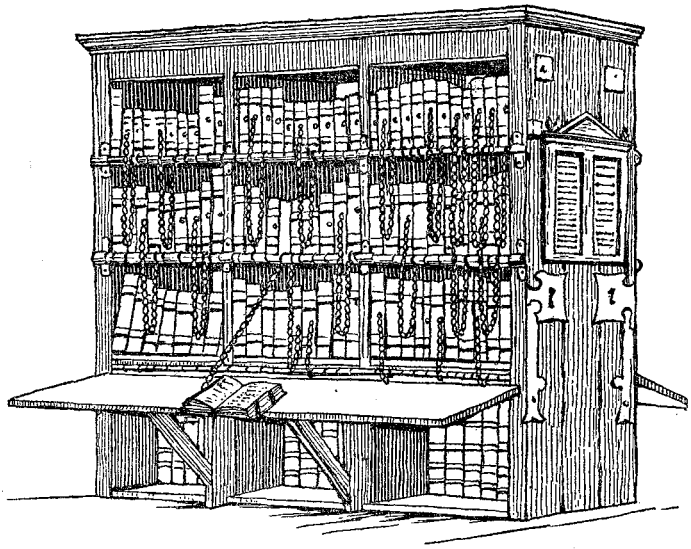
don in 1831. Only one copy of this truly unique work was made. One hundred and fifty-one tints of paper were used and ten hues of ink. The last volume contains metallic printing in gold, silver, and bronzes, on vellum and colored papers.



CHAINED BOOKS, HEREFORD CATHEDRAL, ENGLAND

A temperamental author, Monsieur de Rochas, contended that paper and ink as well as type should be in harmony with the printed word. Thus a love poem should appear in pale ink on rose-colored paper, to convey the delicacy of its impress on the reader.

When Queen Elizabeth was a plump princess, the vogue of embroidered book covers was in its heyday. Princess Elizabeth was adept in this as in other handiwork. She plied her needle with a fine artistry. Two specimens of her book embroidery are treasured in the British Museum.

The custom of chaining books was once common throughout Europe. When there was a row of such books, each chain was fastened to a book by a staple and had a ring at the other end which permitted it to slide on a rod beneath the shelf and to be lifted to an adjacent lectern. The arrangement was like the rings on a curtain pole. The volumes were usually bulky and the attached chains about a yard long. The precaution prevented theft but not mutilation.

In those days books were not for the populace, but were precious possessions of the church and nobility. Even with the spread of enlightenment and printing, most of these chained libraries and isolated tomes remained in duress. It required a smithy to release them, as it had to put them in gyves. At Oxford University the library was fettered for three centuries, and the dons were prone wilfully to tangle the chains. To this day shackled books are met with here and there abroad. The array in Hereford Cathedral, England, is doubtless the most extensive, numbering fifteen hundred volumes. Even the library catalogue is riveted to its stand. Occa-

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sional accessions are chained as of yore.

The extra-illustration of books by the insertion of prints pertaining to the text was a craze comparable only with tulipomania in Holland when fabulous sums were spent for rare bulbs. James Granger, whose hobby was print collecting, in 1769 published a "Biographical History of England" in which blank leaves were interspersed for filling in additional illustrations. This gave rise to "grangerizing", or searching for portraits of celebrities mentioned in the text and of scenes described and inserting these in the volume.

It is not generally known that the Chinese invented the encyclopædia. In 1408 the colossal "Yung-Lo-Ta-Tien", or "Great Encyclopædia of Yung-Lo", was completed. At the command of this emperor, three commissioners, with five directors, twenty supervisors, and a staff of 2,141 assistants, labored for five years compiling it. In magnitude it was the greatest literary undertaking the world has known. It contained 917,480 pages and 366,992,000 characters.

Of the books which are remarkable for oddity by reason of their contents rather than their appearance, that written by Timothy Dexter outdoes most. This screed, "A Pickle for the Knowing Ones, or Plain Truths in a Homespun Dress", is without an iota of punctuation, though capitals are sprinkled with a fine frenzy. A second edition of this masterpiece has a page consisting of line after line of commas, semicolons, colons, and interrogation points for the convenience of those finicky readers who wish to "peper and solt" the text to their liking. The author confides that he speaks with "the voise of the peopel and cant Help it".

Small books have always been much sought. Monsieur Salomon of Paris was the most noted collector who has specialized in these specimens of the Lilliputian press. He acquired more than two hundred.

One famous small book is "The English Bijou Almanack for 1837", issued as a souvenir of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. It is three-quarters of an inch tall, one-half inch wide, and one-eighth inch thick. It has thirty-seven pages.

The "Bijou Almanack" is engraved, however, and not printed from type. It is therefore eclipsed by that other diminutive volume "The Mite", which is one-eighth inch wider. "The Mite" was for a time deemed the smallest book ever printed from movable type. The difficulty of making and handling a font of type such as this may be judged when it is said that four thousand *i*'s weigh one pound. The little known "Alarm Almanac", which appeared at Paris in 1781, is also from type and measures about three-quarters by nine-sixteenths of an inch, being one-sixteenth narrower than "The Mite".

Monsieur Salomon thought he had the smallest book in the world. It was a Dutch work printed in 1674, containing forty-nine pages, one-fourth the size of a postage stamp, and called "Bloem Hofje door", or "The Court of Flowers".

But he erred, for there is a tome of 208 pages, each page with nine lines and about one hundred letters, which is 9½ millimetres by 6 (25.4 millimetres making an inch). This book of slightly over one-third of an inch by a shade less than one-fourth, was printed by Salmin in 1897, and contains a hitherto unpublished letter of Galileo to Madame Cristine of Lorraine. The text is Italian.

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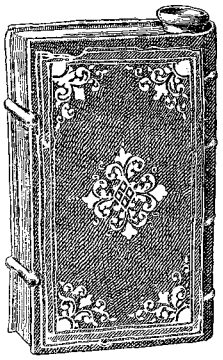
Savants know of several Greek compositions in which one letter of the alphabet is omitted throughout. There is a small Latin prose work by Fulgentius with as many chapters as there are letters in the alphabet. The first chapter is without *a;* the second without *b;* and so on. There are five Spanish stories by Lope de Vega, each omitting one vowel. Then there is a mediæval Latin tract by one Hugbald in which every word begins with a *c.* Were these collected in one volume, it would assuredly make one of the most curious of books.



A BOTTLE-BOOK

One private collector of Bibles has more than 2,000 in various editions and tongues. In the British Museum are upwards of 16,000 copies of the Scriptures or parts thereof. These represent over 2,700 editions in eighty-three languages. There were fifty-seven distinct American Indian idioms north of Mexico; but Eliot's Bible in the Massachuset tongue was for two centuries the only native translation. It was the first Bible printed in America.

Did you ever possess an abecedarium? This Latin-sounding term merely denotes an A-B-C primer. Before the boon of schoolbooks, children learned the alphabet from horn-books. These are not books in the ordinary sense, any more than the terracotta tablets of the ancient Assyrians. The abecedaria known as horn-books resembled milady's hand-mirror except that the handle was usually perforated so that it could be strung to the youngster's girdle. Most horn-books bore the alphabet, numerals, and the Lord's Prayer on a card which slid into grooves or was tacked to the blade. This was covered with a sheet of transparent horn, like mica. Horn-books were usually of wood or bone; but ivory or silver filigree specimens were used among the gentry. Even these, however, fade in charm beside the ginger-bread horn-books of which it was written:

> And that the child may learn the better,
> As he can name, he eats the letter.

It remains only to mention bottle-books which are as rare as fish that climb trees. These curiosities were made in southern France about a century ago and were held in great esteem by judges, advocates, and the learned gentry generally. The legal profession was given to carrying its authorities back and forth under its austere arm. Hence these *reliures-bouteille* which were made of lustrous decorated dark blue faience, in appearance not unlike tooled levant. The contents were wholly liquid or partly literary with a fortifying compartment. Then the bibulous bibliophile took a nip for his constitution. Now the Constitution nips the bibulous bibliophile.

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THE CURIOUS CASE OF KENELM DIGBY

(Being the first of a series of literary detective adventures)

By Christopher Morley

WE had been dining together at the Hotel Ansonia, and as we walked up the shining breezy channel of Broadway my friend Dove Dulcet (the well-known poet and literary agent) vigorously expounded a theorem which I afterward had occasion to remember.

"There is every reason", he cried, "why a poet should be the best of detectives! My boy, there is a rhyme in events as well as in words. When you see two separate and apparently unconnected happenings that seem (as one might say) to rhyme together, you begin to suspect one author behind them both. It is the function of the poet to have a quick and tender apprehension of similarities. The root of poetry is nothing else than describing things as being like other apparently quite different things. The lady who compared herself to a bird in a gilded cage was chaffed for her opulent and spendthrift imagination; but in that lively simile she showed an understanding of the poetic principle. Look here: what is the commonest phrase of the detectives? To put two and two together. What else, I ask you, is the poet doing all the time but putting two and two together—two rhymes, and then two rhymes more, and making a quatrain?"

He swung his stick, puffed strongly at his cigar, and amorously surveyed the deep blue of the night, against which the huge blocks of apartment houses spread their random patterns of lighted windows. Between these granite cliffs flowed a racing stream of bright motors, like the rapids of a river of light hurrying downward to the whirlpool of Times Square.

"Either for a poet or for a detective", he said gaily, "this seems to me the ideal region. I tell you, I walk about here suspecting the most glorious crimes. When I see the number of banana splits that are consumed in these glittering drug stores, I feel sure that somewhere, in the purple silences of the night, hideous consequences must follow. Those who feed so violently on that brutalizing mixture of banana, chocolate ice cream, cherry syrup, and whipped marshmallow, must certainly be gruesome at heart. I look out of my window late at night toward the scattered lights of that vast pile of apartments, always thinking to see them blaze some great golden symbol or letter into the darkness, some terrible or obscene code that means death and terror."

"Your analogy seems to have some sense," I said. "Certainly the minor poet, like the lawbreaker, loves to linger about the scene of his rhyme, or crime."

"You are an amateur of puns," he replied. "Then let me tell you the motto I have coined to express the spirit of this Little White Way—*Ein' feste bourgeois ist unser Gott.* This is the proud kingdom of the tri-

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umphant middle class. It is a perilous country for a poet. If he were found out, he would be martyred at the nearest subway station. But how I love it! See how the quiet side streets cut across highways so richly contrasting: West End Avenue, leafy, expensive, and genteel; Broadway, so gloriously cruel and artificial; Amsterdam Avenue, so honestly and poignantly real. My club is the Hartford Lunch Room, where they call an omelet an *omulet,* and where the mystic word *Combo* resounds through the hatchway to the fat man in the kitchen. My church is the St. Agnes branch of the Public Library, over on Amsterdam Avenue. In those cool quiet rooms, when I watch the pensive readers I have a sense of treading near an artery of fine human idealism. In all this various neighborhood I have a cheerful conviction that almost anything might happen. In the late afternoons, when the crosswise streets end on a glimpse of the Jersey bluffs that glow like smoky blue opals, and smell like rotten apples, I feel myself on the very doorsill of the most stunning outrages."

We both laughed, and turned off on Seventy-seventh Street to the small apartment house where Dulcet had a comfortable suite of two rooms and bath. In his book-lined sitting room we lit our pipes and sat down for a gossip.

We had been talking at dinner of the extraordinary number of grievous deaths of well-known authors that had happened that year. As it is almost unnecessary to remind you, there was Dunraven Bleak, the humorous essayist, who was found stark (in both senses) in his bathtub; and Cynthia Carboy, the famous writer of bedtime stories, who fell down the elevator shaft. In the case of Mrs. Carboy, the police were distracted because her body was found at the top of the building, and the detective bureau insisted that in some unexplainable manner she must have fallen *up* the shaft; but as Dulcet pointed out at the time of the Authors' League inquiry, the body might have been carried upstairs after the accident. Then there was Andrew Baffle, the psychological novelist, whose end was peculiarly atrocious and miserable, because it seemed that he had contracted tetanus from handling a typewriter ribbon that showed signs of having been poisoned. Frank Lebanon, the brilliant short-story writer, was stabbed in the fulness of his powers; and there were others whom I do not recall at the moment. Mr. Dulcet had suffered severely by these sad occurrences, for a number of these authors were his clients, and the loss of the commissions on the sale of their works was a serious item. The secret of these tragedies had never been discovered, and there had been something of a panic among members of the Authors' League. The rumor of a pogrom among best-selling writers was tactfully hushed.

"What is your friend Kenelm Digby writing nowadays?" I asked, as I looked along Dulcet's shelves. Digby, the brilliant novelist, was probably Dulcet's most distinguished client, an eccentric fellow who, in spite of his excellent royalties, lived a solitary and modest existence in a boarding house somewhere in that part of the West Side. Outside his own circle of intimates, Dulcet was almost the only man whom Digby saw much of, and many of us, who admired the novelist's work, had our only knowledge of his person from hearing the agent talk of him.

"By George, I'm glad you reminded me," said Dulcet. "Why, he has just

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finished a story, and he telephoned me this afternoon asking me to stop over at his house this evening to get the manuscript. He never has any dealings with the editors on his own hook—likes me to attend to all his business arrangements for him. I said I'd run over there about ten o'clock."

"That last book of his was a great piece of work," I said. "I've been following his stuff for over ten years, and he looks to me about the most promising fellow we've got. He has something of the Barrie touch, it seems to me."

"Yes, he's the real thing," said Dulcet, blowing a blue cloud of his Cartesian Mixture. "I only wish he were not quite so eccentric. He lives like a hermit-crab, over in a lodging house near the Park. Even I, who know him as well as most people, never feel like intruding on him except when he asks me to. I can't help thinking it would be good for him to get out more and see something of other men in his line of work. I tried to get him to join The Snails, but he says that Amsterdam Avenue is his only amusement. And Central Park seems to be his country club. I wonder if you've noticed that in his tales whenever he wants to describe a bit of country he takes it right out of the Park. I sometimes suspect that's the only scenery he knows."

"He has attained a very unusual status among writers," I said. "In my rambles around among bookshops I have noticed that his first editions bring quite a good price. It's very seldom that a writer—at any rate an American—gets 'collected' during his lifetime."

"Did you ever see any of his manuscript?" asked Dulcet; and on my shaking my head, he took out a thick packet of foolscap from a cabinet.

"This is the original of 'Girlhood'," he explained. "Digby gave it to me. It'll be worth a lot some day."

I looked with interest at the neatly written sheets, thickly covered with a small, beautiful, and rather crabbed penmanship.

"Worth a lot!" I exclaimed. "Well I should say so! Why the other day I was browsing round in a bookshop and I found a lot of his first editions marked at $15 each. It struck me as a very high price, for I know I have seen them listed for three or four dollars in catalogues."

"Exorbitantly high," Dulcet said. "I'm afraid your bookseller is profiteering. I admire Digby as much as anyone, but that is an artificial price. The firsts aren't rare enough to warrant any such price as that. Still, I'm glad to know about it, as it's a sign of growing recognition. I remember the time when it was all I could do to get any editors to look at his things. I'll have to tell him about that, it will please him mightily."

We sat for a while chatting about this and that, and then Dulcet got up and put on his hat.

"Look here, old man," he said. "You squat here and be comfortable while I run round to Digby. It won't take me more than a few minutes—he lives on Eighty-second Street. I'll be back right speedily, and we can go on with our talk."

I heard him go down in the elevator, and then I relit my pipe, and picked out a book from one of his shelves. I remember that it was Brillat-Savarin's amusing "Gastronomy as a Fine Art". I smiled at finding this in Dulcet's library, for I knew that the agent rather prided himself on being something of a gourmet, and I was reading the essays of the jovial French epicure with a good deal of relish when the tele-

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phone rang. I went to it with that slight feeling of embarrassment one always has in answering someone else's phone.

To my surprise, it was Dulcet's voice.

"Hullo?" he said. "That you, Ben? Listen, I want you to come round to Digby's right away," and he gave the address.

Thinking he had arranged a chance for me to meet Digby (I had long wanted to do so), I felt hesitant about intruding; but he repeated his message, rather sharply. "Please come at once," he said. "It's important." Again he gave the street number, made me promise to come immediately, and rang off.

It was nearly half-past ten, and the streets were fairly quiet as I walked briskly along. The house was one of a row of old cocoa-colored stone dwellings, and evidently someone was watching for me, for while I was trying to read the numbers a door opened and from a dark hall an arm beckoned to me. I went up the tall steps and a stout woman, who seemed to be in some agitation, whispered my name interrogatively. "Is this Mr. Trovato?" she murmured.

"Yes," I said, puzzled.

"Third floor front," she said, and I creaked quietly up the stairs.

I tapped at the front room on the top floor, and Dulcet opened.

"Thank goodness you're here, Ben," he said. "Something has happened."

It was a large comfortable room, crowded with books on three walls, furnished with easy chairs and a couch in one corner. A brilliant blaze of light from several bulbs under a frosted hood poured upon a reading table in the middle of the room. Sitting at this table, in a Windsor chair, slumped down into the seat, was a short stout man whose head lolled sideways over his chest. He was wearing a tweed suit and a soft shirt, and looked as though he had fallen asleep at his work. In front of him were some books and a can of tobacco. I recognized him, of course, from the photographs I had often seen. It was Digby.

I looked at Dulcet aghast. But, as always at such moments, what was uppermost in my mind was something trivial and irrelevant. I had an intense desire to open a window. The air in that room was thick and foggy, a sort of close, strangling frowst of venomously strong tobacco and furnace gas. After the clear elixir of the wintry night, it was loathsome. It was the typical smell that hangs about the rooms of literary bachelors, who work all day long in a room without ever thinking of airing it.

"Yes," he said. "He's dead. Pretty awful, isn't it? I found him like this when I got here. No sign of injury so far as I can see."

There was something profoundly dreadful in this first sight, as mere sagging clay, of the brilliant and powerful writer whose books I had so long admired, and whom I had thought of as one of the strong and fortunate few who shape human perplexities to their own ends. I looked down at him with a miserable blackness in my spirit, and laid a hand on Dulcet's shoulder in sympathy.

"I've sent for a doctor," he said. "Before he comes I want to get all the information I can from the landlady. I wanted to have you here as a witness. I haven't touched anything."

The woman had followed me upstairs, and stood crying quietly in the doorway.

"Come in, Mrs. Barlow," said Dulcet. "Now please tell us everything

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you can about where Mr. Digby went this evening, and anything that has happened."

Mrs. Barlow, who seemed to be a good-hearted, simple-minded creature, snuffled wretchedly. "Oh dear, oh dear," she said. "He was such a nice gentleman too. Let me see, he went out about seven, I suppose for his supper, but he was always irregular about his meals, you never could tell, sometimes he would eat in the middle of the afternoon, and sometimes not till late at night, I always would urge him that he would die of indigestion, but he was so kind-hearted."

"You don't know where he went?" said Dulcet.

"Perhaps he went round to the laundry," she said, "for he had a parcel with him, which I took to be his laundry because he usually took it out on Monday evenings because by that time the clean shirt he put on on Sunday was ready to go to the wash. I hate to think that in all the years he lived in this house his laundry was the only thing we ever had a difference about, because I used to have it done in the house for him, but he said my washwoman tore the buttons off his shirts or collars or something, so a little while ago he started taking his things out to be done, but I don't know where because he used to call for them himself."

"You haven't any idea where he used to eat?" insisted Dulcet.

"Oh no, sir, he liked to go different places, you know yourself how he was always a bit queer and concentric and he never talked much about where he went, but always so nice and considerate. Oh, he *was* a fine gentleman."

Mrs. Barlow, plainly much grieved, wept anew.

"Please try to tell us everything you can think of," said Dulcet gently. "What time did he come in, and did you notice anything unusual?"

"Nothing out of the way that I can think of, but then I was down in the basement most of the evening, for I let my maid go to the movies and I had a deal to do. I suppose he went along Amsterdam Avenue, he was always strolling up and down Amsterdam or Columbus, poor man, getting ideas for his literature I guess. He came back about nine o'clock I should say, because I heard the door about then. Just a few minutes before he came in there was a man came to the door with a tin of tobacco for him, which he said Mr. Digby had ordered sent around, and I took it up and put it on his table there it is now, poor man, Carter's Mixture."

Mrs. Barlow pointed to the tin of Cartesian Mixture that stood on the table. Evidently it had only just been opened, for it was practically full.

"Yes," said Dulcet. "Here's his pipe lying on the floor under his chair." He picked up the briar and glanced at it. "Only just begun to smoke it, for the tobacco is only a little burned. He must have been smoking when he.... There wasn't anything else you can think of?"

The woman dried her eyes with her apron. "There was just one other thing I noticed, but I suppose it's silly. But I took note of it special, because I thought I had heard it before, lately. While he was out, and a little before the man brought the tin of tobacco, I heard a sharp tapping out on the street in front of the house. I noticed it special, because I thought at first it was someone rapping on the door, and I wondered if the bell was out of order again, but when I went I couldn't see anyone. But I wondered about it because I heard it two or three times, a sharp kind of tapping, it sounded some

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way like hitting on stone with a stick of some sort."

Dulcet and I looked at each other rather blankly.

"And after that", she went on, "I didn't think about anything one way or another till you came in and I told you to go right up."

There was a clear peal from the front door bell.

"That's the doctor," said Dulcet, and Mrs. Barlow hurried downstairs.

I have never seen anyone so brisk and matter of fact as that physician, and after his arrival the affair seemed to pass out of Dulcet's hands into the painful official machinery that takes charge in such events. Dulcet, acting as the dead writer's literary representative, went into the adjoining room, which was Digby's study, to look over the papers in the desk for any manuscripts that he ought to take care of. He wrote out a list of friends and relatives for me to send telegrams to, and I went out to attend to this. I don't know how they get wind of these affairs, but the reporters were already beginning to arrive when I left.

The next day, and for several days afterward, the papers all carried long stories about poor Digby's brilliant career. Then the literary weeklies took it up. At the libraries and bookshops everyone was asking for his books, and I have never seen a more depressing illustration of the familiar fact that a writer's real fame never comes until it is too late to do him any good. Editors and people who had hardly been aware of Digby's genius while he was alive now praised him fluently, speaking of him as "America's most honest realist", and all that sort of thing. Moving picture people began inquiring about the film rights of his novels. Some of the sensational newspapers tried to play up his death as a mystery story, but the physicians asserted heart failure as the cause, and this aspect of the matter soon subsided.

Except at the funeral, which was attended by a great many literary people, I did not see Dulcet for some days. I gathered from what I read in the news that Digby's will had appointed him executor of his literary property, and I knew that he must have much to attend to. But one afternoon the telephone rang, and Dulcet asked me if I could knock off work and come round to see him. As I was living uptown at that time, it only took me a few minutes to go round to his apartment. I found him smoking a pipe as usual, and looking pale and fagged. He welcomed me with his affectionate cordiality, and I sat down to hear what was on his mind.

"You must excuse me if I'm a little upset," he said. "I've just had an interview with a ghoul. A fellow came in to see me who had heard that I have a number of poor Digby's books and manuscripts. He wanted to buy them from me, offered big prices for them. He said that since Digby's death all his first editions and so on have gone up enormously in value. Apparently he expected me to do trading over the dead body of a friend."

He smoked a while in silence, and then said:

"Sorry not to have seen you sooner, but to tell the truth I've had my hands full. His brother, who was the nearest kin, couldn't come from Ohio on account of serious illness, and everything fell on me. I had to pack up all his things and ship them, all that sort of business. But I've been wanting to talk to you about it, because I'm convinced there was something queer about the whole affair. I'm not satisfied with that heart-failure verdict.

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That's absurd. There was nothing wrong with his heart, that I ever heard of. It's very unfortunate that for the first few days I was too occupied with urgent matters to be able to follow up the various angles of the affair. But I've been turning it over in my mind, and I've got some ideas I'd like to share with you. You remember what I told you, with unfortunate levity, about the secret of detective work being ability to notice the unsuspected rhymes in events? Well, there are one or two features of this affair that seem to me to rhyme together in a very sinister fashion. Wait a minute until I put on my other coat, and we'll go out."

He went into his bedroom. I had not liked to interrupt him, but I was yearning for a smoke, for leaving my rooms in a hurry I had forgotten to bring my pouch with me. On his mantelpiece I saw a tin of tobacco, and began to fill my pipe. To my surprise, just as I was taking out a match he darted out of the bedroom, uttered an exclamation, and snatched the briar from my hand.

"Sorry," he said bluntly, "but you mustn't smoke that. It's something very special." He opened his penknife, scraped out the weed I had put in the bowl, and carefully put it back in the tin. He took the tin and locked it in his desk.

"Try some of this," he said, handing his pouch.

I concluded that the tension of the past days had troubled his nerves. This rudeness was so unlike him that I knew there must be some explanation, but he offered none. As we went down the elevator he said, "The question is, can you make a rhyme out of tobacco and collar buttons?"

"No," I said, a little peevishly. "And I don't believe anyone could, except Edward Lear."

"Well," he continued, "that's what we've got to do. And don't imagine that it's merely a nonsense rhyme, any more than Lear's were. Edward Lear was as great as King Lear, in his own way."

He led me to Eighty-second Street. The December afternoon was already dark as we approached Mrs. Barlow's house. At the foot of her front steps he halted and turned to me.

"Is your pipe going?" he said.

"No," I said, irritably. "It's out. And I haven't any tobacco."

"Don't be surly, old chap; I'll give you some if you'll tell me what you do when your pipe goes out."

"Why, you idiot," I cried, "I do this." And I knocked out the ashes by striking the bowl smartly against the palm of my hand.

"Ah," he said. "But some people do this." He bent down and rapped his pipe against the stone ramp of the steps, with a clear sharp hollow sound.

"Yes, a good way to break a nice pipe," I was remarking, when the basement door of the house flew open, and Mrs. Barlow darted out into the sunken area just below the pavement level. In the pale lemon-colored glare of a nearby street lamp we could see that she was strongly excited.

"Good gracious," she panted. "Is it Mr. Dulcet? Oh sir, you did give me a turn. Oh dear, that was just the tapping sound I heard the night poor Mr. Digby died. What was it? Did you hear it?"

"Like this?" said Dulcet, knocking his pipe again on the stone step.

"That was it, exactly," she said. "What a fright, to be sure! Was it only someone knocking his pipe like that? Oh dear, it did bring back that horrid evening, just as plain."

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"So much for the mysterious death-rap," said Dulcet as we walked back toward Amsterdam Avenue. "I can't claim much ingenuity for that, however. You see, the morning after Digby's death I went round to Mrs. Barlow's early, before she had been out to sweep her pavement. The first thing I noticed, by the lowest step, was a little dottle of tobacco such as falls from a half-smoked pipe when it is knocked out. That seemed to me to make a perfect couplet with Mrs. Barlow's tale of the tapping she had heard. She heard it several times, you remember, in a short space of time. That suggests to me someone standing on the street, or walking up and down, in a state of nervousness, because he didn't smoke any of his pipes through. When they were only half smoked he knocked them out, in sheer impatience. Was he waiting for someone?"

"Perhaps it was Digby himself?" I suggested.

"I don't think so," he said. "Because, in the first place, nervousness was the last thing I would associate with his temperament, which was calm and collected in the extreme. And also, he always smoked Brown-Eyed Blend, and had done so for years. That was the first thing that struck me as unusual the night we were there. That tin of Cartesian on the table. He was a man of fixed habits—why should he have made a change just that night? I picked up the little wad of tobacco I found lying on the step, and took it carefully home. It's Cartesian, or I'm a Dutchman. So item 1 in our criminal rhyme-scheme is, find me a nervous man smoking Cartesian."

"It's a bit fanciful," I objected.

"Of course it is," he cried. "But crime is a fanciful thing. Ever let the fancy roam, as Keats said. What the deuce is the line that follows? Suppose we stroll down Amsterdam Avenue and find a new place to have dinner."

"Poor old Digby," he said, as we walked along admiring the lighted caves of the shopwindows. "How he enjoyed all this. You know, there is a certain honest simplicity about Amsterdam Avenue's merchandising that is pleasant to contemplate after the shining sophistications of Broadway. In a Broadway delicatessen window you'll see such horrid luxuries as jars of cocks' combs in jelly; whereas along here the groceries show candid and heartening signs such as this: 'Coming Back to The Old Times, 17c lb. Sugar'. Amsterdam Avenue shopkeepers speak with engaging directness about their traffic; for instance, there's a barber at the corner of Eighty-first Street who embosses on his window the legend, 'Yes, We Do Buster Brown Hair Cutting'. That sort of thing is very humane and genuine, that's why Digby was so fond of it. There's a laundry along here somewhere that I have often noticed; it calls itself the Fastidious Laundry—"

"Speaking of laundries," I said, "what do you think of this?" We stopped, and I pointed to a neatly lettered placard in a laundry window which had caught my eye. It said:

NOTICE TO ARTISTS AND AUTHORS

WE SEW BUTTONS ON SOFT COLLARS
FREE OF CHARGE

"By Jove," I said, "there's a laundry that has the right idea. I think I'll bring my—"

I broke off when I saw my companion's face. He was leaning forward toward the pane, and his eyes were bright but curiously empty, as

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though in some way the mechanism of sight had been reversed, and he was looking inward rather than out.

"That's very odd," he said presently. "I've been up and down this street many times, but I never noticed that sign before."

He turned and marched into the shop, and I followed. In the soft steamy air several girls were ironing shirts, and a plump pink-cheeked Hebrew stood behind a counter wrapping up bundles.

"I noticed your sign in the window," said Dulcet. "What do you charge for laundering soft collars?"

"Five cents each, but we mend them too, and sew on the buttons."

"That's a good idea," said Dulcet genially. "I wish I'd known that before; I'd have brought my collars round to you. How long have you been doing that? I often go by here, but I never saw the sign before."

"Only about a week," the man replied. "Let's see—a week ago last Monday I put that sign up. You wouldn't believe how much new trade it has brought in. I thought it would be a kind of a joke—the man next door suggested it, and I put it in to please him. But most everybody wears soft collars nowadays, and it seems good business."

"The man next door?" said Dulcet, in a casual tone.

"Sure, the cigar store."

"Is his name Stork?" said Dulcet, reflectively.

"Stork? Why no, Basswood. What do you mean, Stork?"

"I mean," said Dulcet slowly, "does he ever stand on one leg?"

"Quit your kidding," cried the laundryman, annoyed.

"I assure you, I do not trifle," said Dulcet gravely. "I'll bring you in some collars to fix up for me. Much obliged."

We went out again, and my companion stood for a moment in front of the laundry window, looking thoughtfully at the sign.

"While you ponder, old son," I said, "I'll run into Mr. Stork-Basswood's and get some tobacco."

He seized my arm in a firm and painful clutch and whispered, "Look at the corner!"

The laundry was the second shop from the corner. Under the lamp-post at the angle of the street I saw, to my amazement, a man standing balanced on one leg. Directly under the light, he was partly in shadow, and I could only see him in silhouette, but the absurd profile of his one-legged attitude afflicted me with a renewed sense of absurdity and irritation. Dulcet, I thought, had evidently suffered some serious stroke in the region of his wits.

"Now," he said softly, "can you see any rhyme between soft collars and standing on one leg?"

As he spoke, we both started, for somewhere near us on the street there sounded a sharp tapping, a ringing hollow wooden sound. Evidently it came from the one-legged man. This was too much for my composure. I broke away from Dulcet and ran to the corner. As I got there the one-legged creature put down a concealed limb and stood solidly on two feet, in a state of normalcy as an eminent statesman would say. I was confused, and said angrily to the man,

"Here, you mustn't stand like that, on the public street you know, on one leg. It's setting a bad example."

To my amazement he made no retort whatever, but turned and scuttled hastily down the avenue, disappearing

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in the crowds that were doing their evening marketing.

"My dear fellow," said Dulcet calmly, coming up to me, "you shouldn't have done that. You've very nearly spoilt it all. Come on, let's go in and get your tobacco."

Basswood's proved to be one of those interesting combination tobacco, stationery, toy, and bookshops which are so common on the upper West Side. I have often noticed that these places are by no means unfruitful as hunting ground for books, because the dealers are wholly ignorant of literature and sometimes one may find on their shelves some forgotten volume that has been there for years, and which they will gladly part with for a song. A good many of these stores have, tucked away at the back, a shabby stock of circulating library volumes that have come down through many changes of proprietorship. Only the other day I saw in just such a place first editions of Kenneth Grahame's "The Golden Age" and Arthur Machen's "The Three Impostors", which the storekeeper was delighted to sell for fifteen cents each.

A dark young man was behind the tobacco counter, and from him I got a packet of my usual blend.

"Mr. Basswood in?" said Dulcet.

"Just stepped out," said the young man.

We lit our pipes and looked round the shop, glancing at the magazines and the queer miscellany of books. As it was approaching Christmas time there was a profuse assortment of those dreadful little bibelots that go by the name of "gift books", among which were the usual copies of "Recessional and Vampire", Thoreau's "Friendship", "Ballads of a Cheechako", bound in what the trade calls "padded ooze". I was particularly heartened to observe that one of these atrocities, called "As a Man Thinketh", was described on the box (for all such books come in little cardboard cases) as being bound in antique yap. This pleased me so much that I was about to call it to Dulcet's attention, when I saw that he was looking at me from the rear of the store with a spark in his eye. I approached and found that he was staring at a doorway partly concealed by a pile of Christmas toys and novelties. Over this door was a sign, "J. Basswood, Rare Book Department".

"Can we go in and look at the rare books?" said Dulcet.

"Sure thing," said the young man. "Help yourself. The boss'll be back soon, if you want to buy anything."

Mr. Basswood was evidently a man of some literary discretion. To our amazement we found, in a dark little room lined with shelves, a judicious assortment of modern books, several hundred volumes, and all first editions or autographed copies. The prices were marked in cipher, so we could not tell whether there were any bargains among them, but I know that I saw several particularly rare and desirable things which I would have been glad to have.

"Good heavens," I said to Dulcet, "friend Basswood is a real collector. There isn't a thing here that isn't of prime value."

He was staring at a shelf in the corner, and I went over to see what he had found.

"Upon my soul," I cried, "look at the Digbies! Not merely one copy of each, but three or four! This man must have specialized in Digbies."

"Not only that," said Dulcet, "but he has three of 'The Autogenesis of a Novelist', the first thing that Digby wrote. It was privately printed, and

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afterward suppressed. It's devilish rare, even I haven't got a copy. I wish I knew what prices he asks for these things."

"Look at this," I said. "Perhaps this will tell us." I picked up one of a pile of pamphlets that were lying in a large sheet of wrapping paper in a corner of the room. It was evidently a new catalogue of Mr. Basswood's rare books, that had just come from the printer.

"Here we are," I said, turning over the leaves. "Look at this."

SPECIAL NOTE

FINE COLLECTION OF DIGBIANA: J. Basswood wishes to call particular attention to the Digbiana listed below. Anticipating the growing interest in collectors' items of this great writer's work, J. Basswood has taken pains to gather a stock of first editions and presentation copies which is absolutely unique. The prices of these items, while high, are a fair index of the appreciation in which this author's work is held among connoisseurs. All are copies in good condition and their authenticity is guaranteed.

November 15, 19—

Dulcet seized the catalogue and ran his eye down the pages.

"'Girlhood', first edition, Boughton Rifflin Company, 1901, $100," he read. "'The Nuisance of Being Loved', first edition, $75. 'The Princess Quarrelsome', $90. 'The Anatomy of Cheerfulness', autographed copy, $150. 'Distemper', acting copy, signed by the author and Richard Mansfield, $200.

"Why," he cried shrilly, "this is madness! I am in touch with all the dealers in this sort of thing, and I know the proper prices. This man has multiplied them by ten." He thrust the catalogue into his pocket and glared round at the musty shelves.

"I suppose it's due to poor Digby's death," I said. I saw that Dulcet was overwrought, and suggested that we go out and get some supper.

"Supper?" he said. "A good idea. I know a place on Broadway where we can get some guinea pigs." He strode out of the store and I followed, wondering what next. He seized my arm and hurried me along Seventy-ninth Street to Broadway.

(To be concluded.)

CHILD AND WIND

By Lola Ridge

WIND tramping among the clouds
That scatter like sheep—
Wind blowing out the stars
Like lights in open windows—
Wind doubling up your fists at the tall trees
And haling fields by the grass—
Keep away from the telegraph wires
With my kite in your hand!

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MURRAY HILL SEES MR. CHESTERTON

NEW YORK, *January*, 1921.

SOMEWHAT later in this article I am going to present an "interview" (or something like that) with Gilbert K. Chesterton. At least I hope I am going to present it. Yesterday it looked as though I might have to get up my interview without having seen Mr. Chesterton. Though today the situation appears somewhat brighter. "Seeing" Mr. Chesterton (on his visit over here, at any rate) seems to be a complicated matter.

As anything which gives some view of the workings of the Chestertonian machinery ought to be of interest to all who can lay claim to the happy state of mind of being Chestertonites, I'll begin by telling the proceedings so far in this affair. Then as matters progress to supply me with more material (if they do progress) I'll continue.

I one time wrote an article in which I told with what surprising ease I saw Mr. Chesterton several years ago in England. Without acquaintances in England, some sort of a fit of impudence seized me. I wrote Mr. Chesterton a letter, communicating to him the intelligence that I had arrived in London, that it was my belief that he was one of the noblest and most interesting monuments in England; and I asked him if he supposed that he could be "viewed" by me, at some street corner, say, at a time appointed, as he rumbled past in his triumphal car. Mrs. Chesterton replied directly in a note that her husband wished to thank me for my letter and to say that he would be pleased if I cared to come down to spend an afternoon with him at Beaconsfield. Mr. Chesterton, I later recollected, had no means readily at hand of ascertaining whether or not I was an American pickpocket; but from the deference of his manner I was led to suspect that he vaguely supposed I was perhaps the owner of the New York "Times", or somebody like that.

This escapade of my visit to Overroads I suppose it was that put into the head of the editor of THE BOOKMAN the notion that I was a person with ready access to Mr. Chesterton. So I was served with a hurry-up assignment to see him and to deliver an article about my seeing him for the March number of the magazine before that issue (then largely in the hands of the printers) got off the press. Thus my adventures, the termination of which are at present considerably up in the air, began.

I at once wrote to Mr. Chesterton at the hotel where at the moment he was in Boston. At the same time I wrote to Lee Keedick ("Manager of the World's Most Celebrated Lecturers") at his office in New York. I had picked up the impression that a lecture manager of this calibre owned outright the time of a visiting celebrity whom he promoted, and that you couldn't even telephone the celebrity without the manager's permission. I didn't know that you couldn't telephone him anyway. Or that you couldn't telephone the manager either.

Mr. Keedick very promptly replied that he would be very glad to do everything that he could to bring about the interview. Or at least I received a very courteous letter to this

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effect which bore a signature which I took to be that of Mr. Keedick.

Mr. Chesterton was not to be back in New York until after a couple of days. On the day set for his return to town I attempted to communicate with Mr. Keedick by telephone. I am (I fear) a bit slow at the etiquette of telephones, and I so far provoked a young woman at the other end of the wire as to cause her to demand rather sharply, "Who are you?" This matter adjusted amicably, Mr. Keedick turned out to be so utterly remote from attainment that I am not altogether sure such a person exists. However, another gentleman responded cordially enough. Still it seemed to me (upon reflection) that in a matter of this urgent nature I had been at fault in having failed to obtain more definiteness in the matter of an appointment. So I went around to the manager's office. Very affably received. Presented to a gentleman fetched for that purpose from another room, where he had been closeted with someone else. Mr. Widdecombe, this gentleman's name. Introduced as Mr. Chesterton's secretary. A pronounced Englishman in effect. Said very politely indeed, several times, that he was "delighted". Mr. Chesterton, however, was going away tomorrow. Would return two days hence. Made, Mr. Widdecombe, very careful memorandum of my address.

In due course of time thought I'd better look up Mr. Widdecombe again —his memorandum might have got mislaid. Telephoned lecture bureau. Satisfied young lady of honorable intentions. Explained matters all over again to owner of agreeable masculine voice. Received assurance that Mr. Widdecombe would be reminded at once of pressing state of affairs. Disturbed by uneventful flight of time, called in at lecture bureau once more. Learned that Mr. Widdecombe had not yet turned up. They, however, would try to get him on the wire at the Biltmore for me. Yes, he was there, but the fourth floor desk of the hotel said he had just gone into Mr. Chesterton's room, and so (as, apparently, everyone ought to know) could not be communicated with just now. He would call up shortly. Lecture people suggested that I go round to the hotel. If Mr. Widdecombe called in the meantime they'd tell him I was on my way over.

Thought I recognized the gentleman stepping out of the elevator at the fourth floor. I did not know whether or not it was at all the thing to lay hold of an Englishman in so abrupt a fashion, but concluded this would have to be done. Mr. Widdecombe was all courtesy. The point, however, was that "Mr. Chesterton had had an hour of it this morning. Had had an hour of it." This afternoon he was getting off some work for London. Then tomorrow, of course, would be his lecture. My matter *did* seem to be urgent. But what could "we" do? Mr. Chesterton was a "beautiful man". He had been so hospitable to the gentlemen of the press. But if we should go in to him now he would say, "Dear me! Dear me!" I readily saw, of course, that this would be an awful thing, still....

Mr. Widdecombe was somewhat inclined to think that we "could do" this: suppose I should come to the Times Square theatre the next afternoon, at about a quarter to five, call for him at the stage entrance. Yes, he thought we could arrange it that way. I could talk to Mr. Chesterton in the taxi on the way back to the hotel. Perhaps detain him for a few moments afterward. Mr. Widdecombe smiled very pleasantly indeed at the

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idea of so happy a solution of our difficulties. And I myself was rather taken by the notion of interviewing Mr. Chesterton in a cab. The fancy occurred to me that this was perhaps after all the most fitting place in the whole world in which to interview Mr. Chesterton.

So everything seems to be all right.

* * * *

New complications! (This is the following day.) In the morning mail a letter from Mrs. Chesterton, saying so sorry not to have answered my letter before, but it had been almost impossible to deal with the correspondence that had reached them since they arrived in America.... Her husband asked her to say he would very much like to see me. And...could I call at the hotel round about twelve o'clock on Sunday morning? No difficulty about meeting Mr. Chesterton in the kindness of that. But Sunday might be quite too late for the purpose of my article. So I'll go to the theatre anyway, and I'll certainly accept all Chesterton invitations.

* * * *

A colored dignitary in a uniform sumptuously befrogged with gold lace who commanded the portal, directed me to the stage entrance. I passed into a dark and apparently deserted passage and paused to consider my next step. Before me was a tall, brightly lighted aperture, and coming through this I caught the sound gently rising and falling of a rather dulcet voice. A slight pause in the flow of individual utterance, and directly following upon this a soft wave as of the intimate mirth of an audience, wafted about what was evidently the auditorium beyond. Just then a figure duskily defined itself before me and addressed me in a gruff whisper. I was directed to proceed around the passage extending ahead, to Room Three. I should have passed behind a tall screen (I recognized later), but inadvertently I passed before it, and suddenly found myself the target of thousands upon thousands of eyes, with the unmistakable back of Mr. Chesterton looming in the brilliance directly before me.

Regaining the passage, I found a door labeled A 3. Receiving no response to my knock, I opened it; and peered into a lighted cubbyhole about one-third the size of a very small hall bedroom. The only object of any conspicuousness presented to me was a huge, dark garment hanging from a hook in the wall. It seemed to be—ah! yes; it was a voluminuous overcoat with a queer cape attached. So; I was in the right shop all right.

I thought I ought to look around and try to find somebody. I wandered into what I suppose are the "wings" of the theatre. Anyway, I had an excellent view, from one side, of the stage, and of a portion of one gallery. The only person quite near me was a fireman, who paid no attention whatever to me but continued to gaze out steadily at Mr. Chesterton, with an expression of countenance which (as well as I could decipher it) registered fascinated incomprehension. I attempted to lean against what I supposed was a wall, but to my great fright the whole structure nearly tumbled over as I barely touched it. Perceiving a chair the other side of the fireman, I passed before him, sat down, and gave myself over to contemplation of the spectacle.

My first impression, I think, was that Mr. Chesterton was speaking in so conversational a key that I should have expected to hear cries of "Louder!" coming from all over the house. But from the lighted expressions of

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the faces far away in the corner of the gallery visible to me, he was apparently being followed perfectly. I did not then know that at his first public appearance in New York he had referred to his lecturing voice as the original mouse that came from the mountain. Nor had I then seen Francis Hackett's comment upon it that "it wasn't, of course, a bellow. Neither was it a squeak". Mr. Hackett adds that it is "the ordinary good lecture-hall voice". I do not feel that this quite describes my own impression of it the other afternoon. Rather, perhaps, I should put the matter in this way. My recollection of the conversation I had with Mr. Chesterton in 1914 at Beaconsfield is that there was a much more ruddy quality to his voice then than the other day, and more, much more, in the turn of his talk a racy note of the burly world.

Perhaps he feels that before a "representative" American audience one should be altogether what used to be called "genteel". At any rate, I certainly heard the other day the voice of a modest, very friendly, cultivated, nimble-minded gentleman, speaking with the nicety of precision more frequently observed among English people than among Americans. There was in it even a trace of a tone as though it were most at home within university walls. Though, indeed, I am glad to say, Mr. Chesterton did not abstain from erudite, amused, and amusing allusions to the society most at home in the "pubs". And I cannot but suspect that perhaps he would have been found a shade more amusing than even he was if... but, no matter.

One gentleman who wrote a piece about his impressions of Mr. Chesterton's lectures here, felt that the audience didn't have quite so much of a good time as the members of it had expected to have. I heard only a brief, concluding portion of one lecture. The portion of the audience which came most closely before my observation were those seated at the well-filled press table, which stood directly between the speaker and me. These naive beings gave every evidence of getting, to speak temperately, their money's worth.

Though Mr. Chesterton turned the pages of notes as he spoke, he could not be said to have read his lecture. On the other hand, it was clear that he did not appreciably depart from a carefully prepared disquisition.

The tumbled mane which tops him off seemed more massive even than before. It did not, though, appear quite so tumbled. I think there had been an effort (since 1914) to brush it quite nicely. Certainly it is ever so much greyer. I think in my earlier article I said something like this: Mr. Chesterton has so remarkably red a face that his smallish moustache seems lightish in color against it. While Mr. Chesterton's face today could not be described as pale, it looks more like a face and less like a glowing full moon. The moustache is darker against it; less bristling than before, more straggly.

A couple of our recent commentators upon Mr. Chesterton have taken a fling at the matter of his not being so huge as, it seems to them, he has been made out to be. I remember that when I saw him before I was startled to find him more monstrous than even he had appeared in his pictures. He appears to take part a good deal in pageants in England; and recent photographs of him as Falstaff, or Tony Weller, or Mr. Pickwick, or somebody like that, have not altogether squared up with my recollection of

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him. True, he has not quite the bulk he had before; but it is a captious critic, I should say, who would not consider him sufficiently elephantine for all ordinary purposes.

He was saying (much to the delight of the house) when I became one of the audience, that he would "not regard this as the time or the occasion for him to comment upon the lid on liquor". A bit later in the course of his answer to the question he had propounded, "Shall We Abolish the Inevitable?", he got an especially good hand when he remarked: "People nowadays do not like statements having authority—but they will accept any statement without authority." He concluded his denunciation of the idea of fatalism with the declaration: "Whatever man is, he is not in one sense a part of nature. He has committed crimes, crimes", he repeated—with gusto in the use of the word—"and performed heroisms which no animal ever tried to do. Let us hold ourselves free from the boundary of the material order of things, for so shall we have a chance in the future to do things far too historic for prophecy."

I darted back toward Room Three, ran into Mr. Widdecombe, we wheeled, and saw the mountain approaching. Whereas before this offstage place had been deserted, now the scene was populous—with the figures of agitated young women. Mr. Widdecombe, however, with much valiance secured Mr. Chesterton. "Yes, yes," he said, and (remarkable remark!), "I had the pleasure of meeting you in England." He glanced about rather nervously at the dancing figures seeking to obtain him, and led the way for me into the dressing room. Mr. Widdecombe pulled the door to from without.

I am far from being as large as Mr. Chesterton, but the two of us closeted in that compartment was an absurdity. Mr. Chesterton eclipsed a chair, and beamed upon me with an expression of Cheeryble-like brightness. Upon his arrival in New York he had declared to the press that he would not write a book of his impressions of the United States. I asked him if, after being here a week or so, he had changed his mind as to this determination. "Not definitely," he said, "not definitely. But, of course, one could never tell what one might do." He might write a book about us, then? Yes, he might. Did he think it at all likely that he would take up residence over here? A very joyous smile. "One's own country is best," he said. Rumors had several times been afloat that he had entered the Roman Catholic church. Would he say whether there was any likelihood of his doing this? He was an Anglican Catholic, he replied. Not a Roman Catholic—yet. That was not to say that he might not be—if the Church of England should become more Protestant. What was his next book to be? Had he any project in mind of going to Turkey, or Mexico, or some such place? No; the only books he was working on at present were a new volume of short stories and a book (smiling again widely) on eugenics. He knew Mr. Lucas, of course? "Yes, fine fellow." Did he know Frank Swinnerton? No. What was.... But the door was popped open. Several persons were waiting for him, among them Mrs. Chesterton. I helped him into the cape-coat. Stood behind the door so that when it was opened he could get out. "You know Mr. Hill," he said to Mrs. Chesterton. "Thank you, so much," he said to me. And was whisked away.

* * * *

Sunday at the hotel. He was late in

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arriving. I thought it would be pleasanter to wait a bit out in front. Expected he would drive up soon in a taxi. Then I saw him coming round the corner, walking, rolling slowly from side to side like a great ship, Mrs. Chesterton with him—a little lady whose stature suggested the idea of a yacht gracefully coursing alongside the huge craft. I wonder if, nowadays, when most writers seem to try to look like something else, Mr. Chesterton knows how overwhelmingly like a great literary figure he looks.

When we were seated, I asked if he had any dope on his "New Jerusalem" book. He began to tell me how surprised he had been to find Jerusalem as it is. But the substance of this you may find in the book. He expressed sympathy with the idea of Zionism. Remarked that he "might become a Zionist if it could be accomplished in Zion". All that he could find to tell me about his "New Jerusalem" was that it had been "written on the spot". Seemed very disinclined to talk about his own books. Said his feeling in general about each one of them was that he "hoped something would happen to it before anybody saw it".

His surprise at Jerusalem suggested to me the question, had he been surprised at the United States—what he had seen of it? But he dodged giving any "view" of us. His only comment was on the "multitudinous wooden houses".

Had he met many American authors? The one most recently met, a day or so ago in Northampton (though he had met him before in England), was a gentleman he liked very much. He was so thin Mr. Chesterton thought the two of them "should go around together". His name? Gerald Stanley Lee.

But there is not a particle more of time that I can spend on this article.

MURRAY HILL

APOTHEOSIS

By Keith Preston

I OFTEN sigh and wonder whether
Some day they'll bind me in limp leather;
When I am limp enough no doubt
In leather they will lay me out.

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DREISER—AFTER TWENTY YEARS

By Edward H Smith

ON the dollar book counter of a drug store, the first night of this year, I encountered "Jennie Gerhardt". No doubt, this most palatable of the Dreiser novels had been for some time in happy enthronement beside the *opera* of Robert Chambers, Rex Beach, Zane Grey and the female gasp-starters of our common letters. Yet the sight arrested me, and the shopkeeper's assurance that he had sold "quite a lot of copies" had the ring of the incredible. Dreiser with even a small popular audience—with any sort of soda-fountain following—seems somehow beyond the border of expectation.

Within the week Dreiser himself magnified this portent with the news that "The Financier" is soon to be issued in German by Kurt Wolff of Berlin and "Twelve Men" in French by Rieder et Cie. "Sister Carrie", "The Titan", and "Jennie Gerhardt" are also to have French publication from the press of "Editions de la Sirène", and the last named book is to appear serially in "L'Humanité".

So this abused *Uebermensch* among our novel-makers is discovered in the act of invading home popularity and reaching, at the same moment, the elevation of international audience.

It was entirely by accident that these bits of news about the fortunes of Theodore Dreiser came synchronously with an interview he gave me from the eremitage in California where he has been in tropical hiding for a year. The opening notes of this fugue of dreiserian opinion deserve to be sounded here in juxtaposition to the report of his personal progress.

"Do I think there is any tendency toward liberal letters in America?" he demands, echoing my question. "I do not."

Evidently he is not beguiled by the wan light of his own slow illumination. He finds the night that broods upon the creation of fine letters in this country as black as ever. The vast surges of Philistinism and Puritanism seem to him still far too strong and noisy for the little voices lifted among them. He expects America to treat its artists no better than of old. He considers the moving picture finer than most of the books it dramatizes. We shall listen to him at length presently.

Curiously and sadly enough it is now all of twenty years since the young Dreiser saw his first novel issued and the edition all but suppressed, and it is nearly twenty since "Sister Carrie" was published by Heinemann in London, where the book received its critical baptism. It has taken the greater part of a generation for this significant literary figure to reach such "success" as comes to the common spew of sensational novelists in a lustrum.

Looking back over most of this period I remember with pardonable mirth that "Sister Carrie" came into my hands seventeen or eighteen years ago and that when I passed it about for the enlightenment of my colleagues on a certain western newspaper, hugely impressed by the vision and truth

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of the book, wondering that an American had done it, the novel was greeted with the same critical shibboleths that have rained about the head of Dreiser ever since. The editors and reporters of this obscure sheet found the book immoral and not representative of American life. Dreiser's penetration was termed "unprofitable digging under the hardpan". And the whole crew summed up with the damning judgment: "He can't write." Plainly this author was destined for no pleasant voyage.

The selfsame "brabble and roar", to use Thomas Hardy's phrase, has greeted each new Dreiser book as it has come from his hand, and the identical grenades of blind and dull opposition have been thrown upon all his product. Year by year it has become a little more difficult to neglect, disregard, or contemn this man and his work. The schoolgirl reviewer of books, who serves the great bulk of American newspapers of all ranks, finds it increasingly embarrassing to write condescendingly of a man who has long ago made a tradition among the discriminating. The pulpiteering critic has long since broken his last lance against the imperturbable Dreiser mill. But he continues to charge at every opportunity with his pointless weapons, giving the angels and the hereafter strong meat of mirth.

For some years no person of mentality and taste has paid the least attention to the Dreiser detractors. The Wesleyan complex is too well understood to leave this novelist's moral judges any tatters of serious habiliment. By dint of enormous steadfastness, incredible labors, in the face of heartbreaking reverses and treacheries, Dreiser has forced his way to commanding position in our literary procession.

But the better public is unbelievably small. Readers of fine works are so sparsely strewn among us that not a single periodical devoted to sound and progressive letters has survived among us unless extraneously supported or devoted to some blighting propaganda. The man who attempts to feed and clothe himself with the returns from uncompromising books faces always the spectre of starvation and the unsustaining prospect of posthumous regard. Since Dreiser is now in his fiftieth year and no more certain of long survival than the rest of mankind, there has been some reason for the fear that this latter fate might overtake him. He is still by no means certain to witness either reward or recognition to match his labors or his desert. Thus it is heartening to find even the first indications of widening fortune for him.

II

What sort of man is this Dreiser? What strange meat does he eat? What is his secret? These are questions always in the minds and often on the lips of his remoter following. Attempts to describe the man physically and interpret him mentally have been made so frequently and with such varying results that the reader of his *ana* must find himself confounded. Apparently the man's friends and commentators find him as difficult to encompass and describe as the populace finds his books to digest.

Edgar Lee Masters finds the misused Theodore a "soul enrapt demiurge... stalking life". He relates that he has a "mouth cut like a scallop in a pie", and is "a gargoyle in bronze". Arthur Davison Ficke discovers that he has a "large laboring inexpressive

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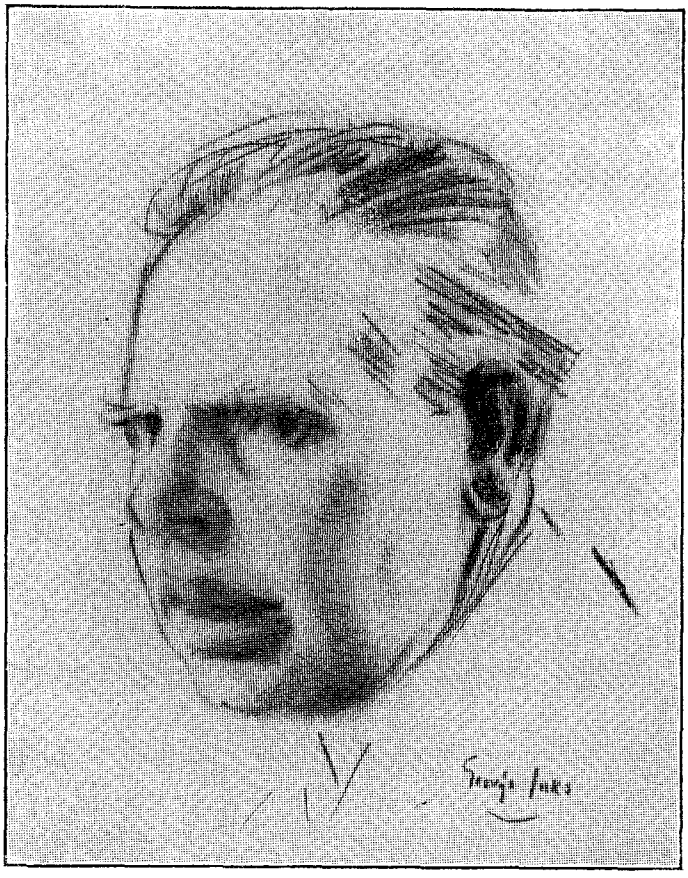

Theodore Dreiser
Sketched by George Luks

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face". The late Harris Merton Lyon descants upon him as "simply a tall, ungainly, unlovely man with something of the cast of Oliver Goldsmith's features. Something lumpish, something rankly vegetable is evoked. What? A huge rutabaga; a colossal pith-stricken radish". And so on in endless extravagance.

Seven or eight years ago I encountered Dreiser in the flesh. A tall, loose-jointed, greying man sat on a bench in a Greenwich Village restaurant, humped down over a table, toying with a napkin and listening a little sadly to the babble of his companions. He was silent and abstracted, apparently absorbing what was being said and busily culling out for himself what was worth remembering. There was abundant chance to observe him and make note. His face seemed to me then a little pale and more than a little heavy. His bluish eyes looked dull and inexpressive save when he laughed. Then they appeared to glance anything but humor—rather depression, discouragement at mankind. He laughed or guffawed often and usually at something that amused no one else. I thought at first he was laughing in some mistaken notion of being polite. Soon enough I discovered that his explosions were outbursts of inner feeling, discharged to hide the vibration of some chord of pity—pity again for mankind.

Three or four times in the course of two hours he had more than a yes or no to contribute to the conversation, and what he said was insignificant and immemorable. I had then already heard and read a great deal about the man and I remember trying to separate my ocular and first-hand impressions from concepts already formed. On examination the man before me seemed nowise extraordinary. I could find none of the rude strength, the fierce passion, the brutality I had heard so much about. Instead I saw a man in whom I believed to sense pain, defeat, bafflement, resignation. The face was perhaps unhandsome, but there was a light and expression about it that struck me at first acquaintance as fine, groping, and pathetic. I should have said that the man behind that mask was kindly, certainly understanding. I wondered if some of his reported brusquerie and rudeness might not be a shield to hide certain weaknesses and failings. I was soon enough to find the whole legend of this terrible man reduced to nothing more than a certain abruptness and social awkwardness, due directly to preoccupation and shyness. The lionlike Dreiser of the yarns has always been, under my eye, the most lamblike of men, though I make no doubt he has teeth.

Well, I have glimpsed him often and often in the intervening years, at work, at play, sad and gay, depressed and triumphant—at times even widely talkative, though the habit of silence and receptivity does not come off him easily. Even still I fail to find the symbols of those vasty descriptions anywhere about his form or aura. Sherwood Anderson assures us that Dreiser is old, very old, grey, bleak, lumpy, hurtful. No doubt, if your eye is confused by your memory of the Dreiser character procession and his philosophic evocation.

My string of adjectives for Theodore Dreiser is somehow barren of these disconsolates. To me he is tall and shambling, tired, shy, timid, always tentative, absorbed and absorbing, hungry, searching, penetrating, slow, inexhaustibly weary, pitying and pitiful. He is also jocular and frequently boyish. He is romantic with-

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out having many of the graces of the romancer. He is superficially inexpressive and annoyingly inarticulate, at the wrong time—a quality which sometimes reaches over into his writing and blurs many an exuberantly conceived passage.

I assure you he is not vegetable or lumpy. He has a penchant for palm beach suits and slender canes. The last time I appraised him he seemed lean and getting leaner. There was an air almost of the dapper about him, though his lolling gait undid the impression. Far from the sum total of impressions to be got from his pen photographers, this man who is charged with nothing so frequently as with constant preoccupation with the sordid and ugly, is æsthetically sensitive, moved by a picture or a bar of music, quite capable of being sentimental and generally a little mystic. The truth is that beauty sways him and enslaves him and hurts him. But his beauty is not of the common sort. There is a loveliness too bright for the Semeles of the herd. They have had their revenge by denying its existence. Dreiser is, I apprehend, one of those who will testify that it is sometimes a torture to have eyes for no other.

Nothing has been so much written about by the fervid interpreters of the Dreiser personality and so stupidly assaulted by his critics as a certain ponderosity and lack of humor in the man. I do not know why Americans consider that a great man must also be a funny fellow. Perhaps it is because such empty and sterile phrases as "the saving grace of humor" and "the salt of wit", have been adopted as a public creed. (It would not be the first time that our people have built a faith about a few hollow words—notably from our political oratory, which happens to be about the lowest in the world.) But the idea persists and has been used to the detriment of this serious artist.

Certain it is that there is little levity in the man and no wit. He does not play facilely with either words or ideas. Again, life affects him as immensely tragic, hopeless, and piteous. He has not the heart to jest. He is neither Gallic nor Celtic. There is a Greek fatality about him and what he visions. Yet the man floods with laughter. He is constantly breaking into the disconcerting mirth I have already described, used to conceal some other emotion. But he is also full of a large, mastifflike playfulness which he accompanies by successive and sustained detonations of bass laughing. An intrusive mongrel pup bent on burrowing its way up the dreiserian trousers leg has been known to divert him to the point of collapse, and I have seen the rogueries of Messrs. Potash and Perlmutter confound him with guffaws.

I can remember the time when I was convinced the man kept his cool silence, even in the circle of his intimates, because of inability to talk. And there is some truth in the notion. He is naturally neither vocal nor articulate, and talking confuses him. But I think there is another reason for the silence. Dreiser is constantly and, I think, for the most part unconsciously absorbing everything and everybody about him. He has the passion for observation and acquisition necessary to his work. He does not talk for fear of missing something. He is too busy receiving to give forth.

One evening when I asked him to dinner there was a striking illustration of his absorptive powers. Among the notables at a long table in the amiable Barbetta's wine den were a Rosicrucian adept, a moving picture

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magnate, a bank robber, a musician, a few assorted painters, and two or three newspaper men. One of the last came with the determination to call on Dreiser for a speech, to stand him on the table and have him talk to the assembled diners, or some other madness. The thing began at six and wound up at one. The movie man talked himself hoarse. The Rosicrucian monk grew breathless with revelations. The artists proclaimed a new theory of beauty. Only Dreiser and the bank robber were silent. The novelist sat all evening drinking in everything, taking into mind a phantasmagoria of conversation sufficient to unseat the reason of a Mirandola; giving out no more than a desultory fire of guffaws and an occasional question.

When the proprietor finally uttered us into the early morning Dreiser took the musician under his wing and started for Greenwich Village, where both lived. Some time before two they reached the latter's studio and went in.

"Play me some Strauss and Debussy and tell me about them," said the writer, still unsatisfied, insatiable. The pianist pounded away for two hours, pausing now and then to rest his hands ánd explain. Just before four o'clock, Dreiser got up, skinned on his coat, clapped his hat on his head and stalked off with hardly a word—home to sleep on his mental gorge.

The recording of such trivialities needs, perhaps, to be excused on the ground of an attempt to present a more intimate and detailed view of the man than has yet been given.

Whatever critics have understood Theodore Dreiser have commented upon his aloofness and detachment, his dispassionate and tolerant insight, his compassion for the swirl of men and motives about him, his loneliness in the multitude. Someone has referred to him as a man on a high hill. H. L. Mencken notes the "gesture of pity" which is in all the Dreiser work. These qualities in the work and the man are, of course, complementary and they both explain and question.

A certain loneliness or remoteness is a need of the creative artist, and it seems to me that this quality is especially necessary to Dreiser, not only because of the kind of work he does but because of the manner of its doing. I imagine that he works slowly and with great effort. Unless he has recently yielded to the drudgery-lifting powers of the typewriter, he writes everything slowly and deliberately in his close but vague chirography. I fancy that words flow no more easily to his pen than his tongue, and that enormous imposts of time are necessary to his vast output. Hence, it seems probable that Dreiser has had to train himself against time-consuming friendships and social pleasantries. He has had to restrain his enthusiasms, whatever they may have been. He has closed his mouth and opened his ears; closed his doors and widened his eyes.

So we have here a man friendly but, so far as I know, without an absorbing friendship and probably incapable of one; a man closely touched and moved by all the pathos of life, akin to all suffering, and yet endlessly remote.

It is, perhaps, not altogether the fault of such a man if he permits himself no complete intimacies with his fellows. This yielding belongs, first of all, to his work. Again, it is certain that this particular artist's experience with men and their world has been a little too disappointing to leave much spontaneous gregariousness. I can remember several occasions when

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I was unfortunately a witness to some of these clashes. When "The Genius" was suppressed at the nod of the vice snoopers there were several honest efforts to aid the novelist or at least to hearten him against the iniquitous stroke. These movements served, more than anything else, I think, to bring out the jealousy and pettiness of our writing crew and to throw the novelist back upon his inward strengths, upon his solitariness. Again, when Dreiser brought a group together to promote a society for the aid of aspiring authors, a project he had long nourished, nothing was accomplished beyond an exposure of selfishness and log rolling. I think I have seldom seen a man so hopelessly alone as he seemed on this evening.

III

"I do not believe there is any tendency in the country toward liberal letters," the novelist began when I asked him for an expression of opinion. "There is unquestionably a growing audience for books of a liberal character. But the growing clan of the lovers of these, contrasted with those who love a flivver and a bakery or a small insurance business, and who find that they have neither time nor the mind for anything above the mere matter and necessity of making a living, is as one to ten or twenty thousand. I mean that literally. Not that Americans are not intelligent, or let us say slick, in a commercial and material way. They are. In any material and mechanical way you cannot 'put anything over on them'. They usually sense about what you are planning to do and proceed to do it first. But the same people who can build a moving picture concern, a great popular magazine, a bank, a real estate concern or something of that sort, when it comes to letters of a liberal and artistic character, are as dull as oxen. They literally have no conception of art in the scriptic sense. I am thinking of de Maupassant, Flaubert, Chekhov, France, Wilde, Poe, D'Annunzio, Shaw, Moore, Hauptmann—well, extend the list yourself. In fact, nearly all—yes, I can safely say all—who have attempted liberal and artistic writing in America, in the best sense, have failed not of artistic achievement in the main but of public recognition and support.

"Let us begin at the beginning. Take Poe. Is his artistic product really not marvelous? Can you resist its appeal? And was he not lied about and misrepresented and literally tortured by the rude and crass attitude of the public of his day? Consider Griswold, that malicious, falsifying preacher in letters, venting a cheap commercial jealousy and spleen upon a man so far above his level spiritually that he should have approached him on his knees. And to this day we have the trashy newspapers, and the trashier magazines, still hawking the same old lies and the same old cheap commercial misunderstanding and abuse which irritated and confused him then. I marvel that the man wrote anything at all. It has been only a year or two since 'The Atlantic Monthly', in an article written by that master critic, Bliss Perry, grudgingly admitted him to the same table with Howells, Stevenson, Mark Twain and, if I am not mistaken, Bret Harte. As I recall one paragraph of this excellent critique, it pictured Poe as saying to himself that he was entitled to sit with these master minds and, (so concluded the admirable Perry), he would be right. But would he?

"America never did and never will understand the spiritual needs of a

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man like Poe. Our people cannot grasp the artistic temperament or value the work of a temperamental artist.

"Step on a little and look at Walt Whitman. Consider only the noble and even religious attitude of the Concord school of literature and art—how standoffishly he was patronized by Emerson, Holmes, Lowell, the author of 'Prue and I', and their ilk. I haven't any doubt that Longfellow, that third-rate rhymester, thought he was dreadful—a low fellow, not fit to come within a hundred leagues of Parnassus. But I certainly need not recite this history to you, nor to say what I personally think of Whitman. To this day the soundest appreciation of him comes from abroad.

"Sidney Lanier was a poet of no mean ability. He flourished—or was neglected, rather—between the 'seventies and the 'nineties. 'The Marshes of Glynn' and 'Corn' are no mean poems. They are excellent, in my judgment; far better, say, than anything which Mr. Longfellow or Mr. Holmes or Mr. Lowell or Mr. Emerson (as poet, I mean) ever wrote. But was he recognized? or made anything of? He was—not. No recognition and no market. Such is his simple tale.

"The noble Mark Twain, compromiser with convention that he was, and a mere clown artistically compared to Poe, was himself sniffed at by the college and magazine fraternity of Boston and New Haven and Franklin and Union Squares until very well along toward the end of his life. I recall picking up one day in the office of a publisher a history of American literature written by some college pundit of the day and bringing the story of our various masters down to say 1898 or 1900. The book was then but newly published and in it was no mention of Twain save at the very end—the very last page, if you please—where, in summing up a few negligibles, it was admitted, grudgingly, as one could see, that in the last few years a few of the books of one Mark Twain seemed to have a popular appeal of a sort. Yet in this same volume were long and serious estimates of E. P. Roe, Louisa M. Alcott, Ik Marvel, Nat Willis, and a score of others now entirely forgotten. I saw the book in 1901.

"But that is not all, by any means. In my day—this is from 1895-6, at which time I first took notice of things literary—I have seen quite every book of any real literary distinction, as well as the author of the same (American I mean) properly and in some cases deliberately neglected. I have reference to such writers as Henry B. Fuller, author of 'With the Procession' and others; Hervey White, author of 'Quicksand'; Will Payne, author of 'The Story of Eva'; Stephen French Whitman, author of 'Predestined'; I. K. Friedman, author of 'By Bread Alone'; Harold Frederic, author of 'The Damnation of Theron Ware'; and Judge Grant, who wrote 'Unleavened Bread', most utterly and completely neglected. Wild huzzas for such writers as Richard Harding Davis, Owen Wister, Winston Churchill, the Reverend Cyrus Townsend Brady, F. Hopkinson Smith, Robert W. Chambers, and so on—but not a worth-while critical word for any of these men. They were and remain outside the pale of decent American letters. In almost every case they succeeded in writing but one book before the iron hand of convention took hold of them. Will Payne wrote 'The Story of Eva', a fine piece of American realism, and then quit—started to make a decent living by

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writing for 'The Saturday Evening Post'. Stephen French Whitman quit after his 'Predestined'. Not a thing since. Norris wrote 'McTeague' and the 'The Octopus'. Then he fell into the hands of the publishers who converted him completely to 'The Pit', a bastard bit of romance of the best seller variety. Hamlin Garland wrote 'Main-Traveled Roads'—his one book, by the way—and then diluted a clear realistic vision with as much sweetness and light as he thought would keep him respectable (on the calling lists of American manufacturers of plows and elevators and saws, possibly) and sell a few more books. After that—well, you know the rest. Even Chambers wrote one good book, 'The King in Yellow', proving that he could have written more of the same. He deliberately chose the best seller grade, I fancy. Unquestionably Jack London did so. I have read several short stories which proved what he could do. But he did not feel that he cared for want and public indifference. Hence his many excellent romances."

The novelist turned from the experiences of authors to consideration of the public and its taste.

"No, distinctly our American world is unfriendly to letters in their best or truly interpretative sense," he continued. "An American, outside of his business, cannot possibly look life in the face. In trade he will lie, cheat, swindle, steal, lure, trap, rob, and slay in every conceivable fashion, moving heaven and earth to destroy his competitor and seem better than he is, but when he reads or writes, assuming that he can do either, he wants and expects the world to be pictured as a realm of surpassing excellence. In his books all men must be honest, kind, and true; all women, more especially his wife and daughters, pure as driven snow. There are no cruel, sneaky, conniving business men in all the walks of trade such as he ornaments, none—at least not in his books. But read the sweet mush on the editorial page of the average American paper. How good all these business men are, or should be. Then turn, if you will, to the records of the courts before which these men are called to answer for their crimes. It is to laugh. But no American book must reflect that. It is low, sordid, not the sort of thing the people should read, because, in good sooth, it gives one a bad impression of the American business man, the American father, the American son, the American mother, the American daughter. Hence the writer of a serious interpretation of America is more or less a scoundrel, a low fellow. I hope I have the honor to be one.

"You ask me about criticism. Well, in the face of such conditions how can the serious and discriminating critic, any more than the serious and interpretative writer, flourish? Your best critic, like your best writer, must not only have something to interpret, but he must be allowed to interpret it; in other words, have a market for his interpretations, once he has found a writer or two or ten to interpret. In America the best a critic of this stature can do is to pen a lament to the effect that he has so little to write about. The things he can laud or enthuse over are few and far between. It is a significant fact that our best contemporary critics of both the book and the stage are not only loud and bitter in their denunciation of the annual American literary output, but also of the immense audiences which the same persistently obtain. They laugh and swear at the authors and playwrights, as the case may be, but they laugh and swear even louder at the public

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which accepts them so enthusiastically. Of really exceptional men they have very little to say, because, in truth, there are so few at work in America. One critic solemnly proclaims that he is tired of hearing the same few writers over and over. Even so, but who or what is to blame? The critics, the writers, or the land itself? I say the land.

"The time is not propitious for fine letters. America is too busy constructing material equipment for more life. At best art is a byproduct. It is free, surplus, joyous energy—something over and above material necessity. Perhaps the American has not reached that free material state where he can afford to pause and think, aside from material things, of course. It may be that once he has built all the needful bridges, dug all the needful mines, erected all the needed skyscrapers, built all the necessary roads and factories and machines, he will pause to meditate upon the many things he has done and the manner in which he has done them. Possibly. But also possibly not. In my humble judgment, or according to my taste, the great works, the great commercial and financial planning and execution, ought to go hand in hand with great pictures and plays and books which should somehow picture and interpret the same. Maybe I am wrong. Perhaps this is not the way. Perhaps this can all be done best after the fact. But can it? I have the feeling that if it is not well and beautifully done now it will never be done. Rome did not interpret itself and so remains uninterpreted. Greece truly interpreted itself in many ways and so we know Greece. Russia, England, and France have done well, very well, more particularly Russia. But how about America? The great century that recently closed, for instance? The one through which we are living now? I think we have precious little to show for them."

I asked Dreiser, who has been in touch with the motion picture industry and its people for a year, what he thought of the cinema.

"Despite many defects", he said, "I think the movies show more of an advance than our current books or plays. As I see most books and plays they are somewhat more sensibly interpreted in the films than on the stage or between cheap covers. Some moving picture directors appear to have more brains and taste than most of the authors whose works they handle. Yet this is not a clean bill of health for the movies by any means. They have a long way to go, but they give some evidence of being on their way. The trouble with movies as they stand and as they apparently must remain, is that they are a composite of applied brains and borrowed ideas. But even so they are in the main truer to fact than the books and plays from which they are taken."

IV

To those who have been put to thought in the matter there is, certainly enough, little that is new here, either as fact or as Dreiser doctrine. In the end the wonder is not Dreiser's —that Poe wrote anything at all in the face of personal slander and artistic misunderstanding — but a general marvel that Dreiser keeps steadfastly on his way in the teeth of organized, commercialized, capitalized Philistinism such as was unknown two generations ago.

No one can write of this man without wondering and searching at him as a most provocative phenomenon. His is the only sustained fine phrase

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sounding in the cacophony of American fiction making.

The facts as to his life are well enough known. He was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1871, the twelfth of thirteen children of a woolen weaver, whose factory was destroyed when Theodore was a child, leaving the family in sorry poverty. He is of Rhenish Catholic blood and his father was not only a devotee but a zealot. His much older brother was the celebrated Paul Dresser, the Broadway king of low-brow balladry, whose popularity twenty-five years ago was as profound as his younger brother's more recent neglect. For a number of years Theodore Dreiser was a newspaper reporter, employed on dailies in Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, and New York. His "Sister Carrie" was begun while he was reporting on a western newspaper and its completion followed his advent in New York, where he also wrote short stories for a time, edited various magazines for a number of years, and finally quit the commercial literary field in disgust and went resolutely back to his novel writing.

Dreiser attended the Indiana public schools and was for one year in the state university. Then necessity forced him out into breadwinning. He was never out of the country until he had reached forty and begun to be celebrated. He has read foreign literary men only in translation, since he speaks no languages have his own, remembering even the German of his parents most imperfectly.

The newspaper work of the young Dreiser shows itself as a much more vital factor than any of his critics have noted or his apologists admitted. Nothing is so certain as that reporting opened his eyes and stripped him of a thousand illusions. No other experience teaches men such sovereign contempt for names and reputations, such healthy skepticism of externals and masks, such clear understanding of the motives which yeast under the surface of life and bring about its actions and reactions. In no other profession is curiosity about life and its individuals—that noblest of vices—practised as a recognized art, with its conventions and its highly developed technique. Dreiser himself confesses the journalistic debt on a hundred pages.

On the other hand much of the loose, careless, bad writing this author has done—the one thing that has always given his stupid detractors something real to hang their plaints upon—is also to be charged to newspaper work. The journalese cries out from almost every page of the writer's text. The solecisms of the reporter are everywhere. The stock phrases of the headline builder and the "lead" writer ring through his golden thought with brassy dissonances. All this has been said nauseously often but always without understanding of the cause.

The truth is that Dreiser's whole technical training as a writer has been acquired in the news foundries and that he has since been too busy observing, interpreting, and translating life, too absorbed in the elemental struggle between man and nature, between self-constituted right and helpless truth, to devote time to the correction and reconstruction of his writing. Any writer who has once fallen into the mire of the journalese is doomed to spend the rest of his life cleansing himself or to go unclean.

Personally, though I have myself been fool enough to carp and bluster at his inept writing and to urge all manner of changes, I am certain now that any attempt to make a stylist of the man or to divert his thought from

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the thing he is trying to say to the manner of its saying, can only result in ruin. If Flaubert can be rated among the immortals for his style, despite obvious faults of philosophy and sense and despite occasional preoccupation with the merely libidinous, so Dreiser ought to be exalted for the content and inner beauty of his work, letting the matter of scriptic nicety rest.

For those who insist on seeing Dreiser as not quite American it may be suggested that his constant "journalisms" form the only semi-polite language that has had its origin among us, and for those who persist in the asinine sweeping assertion, "He can't write", there is the truth that many passages of Dreiser's best work ring with an eloquence and sincerity beyond the achievement of any of the stylists so dear to the mealy mouth. There is in a respectable body of his writing a beauty beyond common conception and a literary effect often laboriously but always tellingly achieved.

Dreiser is not a schooled craftsman, to be sure. That is why there is an appalling unevenness in his product. He is in the main an instinctive artist. Whether he knows how he gets certain effects, seems to me doubtful. At least, I never expect to hear him articulate enough to reveal the method.

Our obscurantists will certainly never accept this man and never grant the truth of his work, not because, as they set up, he is not typical of America, but precisely because he is so faithfully America's expounder and depicter and so inescapably the product of this country and this time. His naive approach to many of the refinements of life; his insatiable, youthful curiosity about everything—matters the most weighty and the most trivial; his untiring and unstinting energy; his very cumbrous and laboring application of force to great obstacles and his triumphant surmounting of them —all these things belong to us and to our time. No other people and no other social state in all the cortège of history could have wombed this man.

There is thus an indefeasible difficulty in finding the literary cognates of Dreiser. H. L. Mencken long since set down Conrad and Hardy as his only recognizable relatives and this judgment seems to me accurate and penetrating. Not that either of these men writes or constructs remotely after the Dreiser fashion, but that both think and feel and see their subject as he. Mr. Mencken calls attention to the guerdonless questing of these men, the seeking without finding, as he expresses it. Hardy has put into his own verse this view of the plight of mankind:

> ..... this brake Cimmerian
> Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,
> While still we scan
> Round our frail faltering progress for some path or plan.

There is, it seems to me, in these three sons of disenchantment, a marked difference of progress along the road of disbelief and disavowal. Hardy strikes me as having arrived in his senectitude at a positivism of negation. He no longer doubts. He denies. Nothing of the old faith of mankind remains. He has trod all but the last reaches of the path. He *knows* it ends in nothing. All his scanning has disclosed *nothing*.

In Conrad, on the other hand, there is still the passionate note of questioning, the bitter bright song of the seeker. But unless I fail to read into him something that is there, he seeks without hope of finding, without any deep wish to find. His only philosophy

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seems to me expressed through man driven darkly to his day's work by some blind energy driving blind matter, and whither? He rarely asks.

Dreiser, as I apprehend the man, is not yet so remote, not so sure of his negation, not ready to detach himself from the woe of men. Not long ago I asked him, a little idly, I fear, what conclusions he had come to about it and about; what changes time had etched upon himself. Here is a paragraph from his letter:

"I think, for one thing, I am much more philosophic than I once was, for which fault may whatever powers there be forgive me. Next, I may be somewhat less romantic, though I doubt it. In some respects I think I am a better liver; not so depressed about the tragic aspect of things. The thing takes on the look, at times, of a very badly played melo-drama. At other times I get a little cross, but that is only when I cannot find refuge in either work or play. I never can and never want to bring myself to the place where I can ignore the sensitive and seeking individual in his pitiful struggle with nature,—with his enormous urges and his pathetic equipment. As I see him he is too often a poorly armed and undernourished, and none too courageous private, sent over the top at dawn against his wish or will in the face of a veritable hell fire. We should, all of us, like so much to live and be somebody in this great, indifferent, cruel swirl. And only see what in the main happens to us. Think back over the many you have known. So many who have tried so hard and failed are in my thoughts too much, perhaps. When I think of them, as I do a great deal, I haven't the heart to 'get too gay', as the expression is."

Here is the already mentioned "gesture of pity", but there is also about it the strong movement of fellow feeling, the absence of chill detachment. There is no Jovianism here and no Nietzschean contempt for the weak and worthless. Just this absence is one of the outstanding stigmata of the Dreiser work. I must confess that he is often all too human for my palate, too much involved in the drama.

So there is in Theodore Dreiser's questing still the human note of wishfulness. I do not think he expects to find. Consciously he probably does not hope to find, but in his unconscious there labors still the pitiful deep hunger of mankind for some satisfactory and impossible solution. Perhaps this explains the much noted preoccupation of his with the so-called unseen world, with semi-mystical subjects such as underlie some of his minor work. Whether this is only a mild concern or whether its hold upon the writer will augment with time, seems to me a matter of vital interest but one which cannot now be discussed for lack of evidence.

At any rate, here you have a man who stands leagues aloof from all other literary figures in the country and may not be seriously compared with any of his predecessors excepting the two or three abused masters.

Says Sherwood Anderson:

"The feet of Dreiser are making a path for us, the brutal heavy feet. They are tramping through the wilderness, making a path. Presently the path will be a street, with great arches overhead and delicately carved spires piercing the sky. Along the street will run children, shouting 'Look at me'—forgetting the heavy feet of Dreiser."

I think the children will not be able to forget.

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THE POEMS OF THE MONTH

(December, 1920)

Selected by Louis Untermeyer

NO spectacle is more ludicrous to the gods—and to men—than when man, the fallible, attempts infallibility. Let a person begin to set up as an oracle, let him judge anything—from a poetry contest to a dog fight—and his friends, yielding to the universal distrust of man in the rôle of the omniscient, will first rally, then avoid, and finally waylay and do away with him. The contempt in which umpires are held is significant.... Having profited by these conclusions, I wish to disclaim any pretense of "judging" the poetry of any month.

The outstanding feature of December seems to be—but why should I hesitate to be dogmatic?—the outstanding feature is the group of four poems contributed to "Harper's Magazine" by Robert Frost. But having said this much, it is difficult to choose one of the quartet for quotation. All contain the Frostian characteristic: the distinction of utterance coupled with an unusual dignity of mind; the quiet magic that, without ever raising its voice, is so eloquent in "North of Boston" and the later lyrics. The first of these four, the sharply condensed "Fire and Ice", will find new niches in forthcoming anthologies; "Wild Grapes", a feminine companion-piece to the boy-swung "Birches", is delightful in its whimsical picture, magnificent in its last ten lines; "The Valley's Singing Day" is one of Frost's loveliest lyrics. I select his "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things" chiefly because it reveals this poet's half-ironic raillery as well as his fresh apperceptions. The background of the burned house is never allowed to become "grim"—and the birds that, in such a poem, would be humanized and made to cry over the ruins.... Well, one must

> ...be versed in country things
> Not to believe the phœbes wept.

E. A. Robinson's sonnet "Vain Gratuities" illustrates that intellectual and technical precision which distinguishes all of this author's work from the early "The Children of the Night" (1894) to the recently published "The Three Taverns". This is craftsmanship of a high order—and something that is far beyond technique. The last two lines of the sestet reveal one of Robinson's favorite effects; a way of capping a casual and almost colorless poem with a sudden brilliance.

Amy Lowell's "A Grave Song" which appears in the same number of "The New Republic" as Robinson's poem, calls attention to the decided leap forward which this weekly has taken in the quality of the verse it is printing. Miss Lowell's sharp quatrains are in her best *macabre* vein.

As a fourth choice, I have wavered between William Ellery Leonard's crashing protest "The Lynching Bee" (from "The Nation") and Osbert Sitwell's intense little lyric "Dead Man's Wood" (from "Poetry"). I quote the latter, chiefly because Leonard's fierce outcry is over four hundred lines long.

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THE NEED OF BEING VERSED IN COUNTRY THINGS

The house had gone to bring again
To the midnight sky a sunset glow.
Now the chimney was all of the house that stood,
Like a pistil after the petals go.

The barn opposed across the way,
That would have joined the house in flame
Had it been the will of the wind, was left
To bear forsaken the place's name.

No more it opened with all one end
For teams that came by the stony road
To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs
And brush the mow with the summer load.

The birds that came to it through the air
At broken windows flew out and in,
Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh
From too much dwelling on what has been.

Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf,
And the aged elm, though touched with fire;
And the dry pump flung up an awkard arm;
And the fence post carried a strand of wire.

For them there was really nothing sad.
But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,
One had to be versed in country things
Not to believe the phœbes wept.

Robert Frost
—*Harper's Magazine*

A GRAVE SONG

I've a pocketful of emptiness for you, my Dear.
I've a heart like a loaf was baked yesteryear,
I've a mind like ashes spilt a week ago,
I've a hand like a rusty, cracked corkscrew.

Can you flourish on nothing and find it good?
Can you make petrifaction do for food?
Can you warm yourself at ashes on a stone?
Can you give my hand the cunning which has gone?

If you can, I will go and lay me down
And kiss the edge of your purple gown.
I will rise and walk with the sun on my head.
Will you walk with me, will you follow the dead?

Amy Lowell
—*The New Republic*

VAIN GRATUITIES

Never was there a man much uglier
In the eyes of other women, or more grim:
"The Lord has filled her chalice to the brim,
So let us pray she's a philosopher,"
They said; and there was more they said of her—
Deeming it, after twenty years with him,
No wonder that she kept her figure slim
And always made you think of lavender.

But she, demure as ever, and as fair,
Almost, as they remembered her before
She found him, would have laughed had she been there;
And all they said would have been heard no more
Than foam that washes on an island shore
Where there are none to listen or to care.

Edwin Arlington Robinson
—*The New Republic*

DEAD MAN'S WOOD

In Dead Man's Wood
The rustling trees
Shiver, shudder
In the breeze.

The bird-song drips
On Dead Man's Wood,
Trickles through
Like falling blood.

And if the sun
Gives forth its light,
The yellow glory
Turns ash-white.

The dark tall trees,
When day is past,
Draw back their leaves,
Pale and aghast.

When rusty shadows
Fall at dusk,
Surely the spirit
Leaves its husk?

All night, all day,
Within this cover,
I sit and wait
For my dead lover.

Osbert Sitwell
—*Poetry; A Magazine of Verse*

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*Each month* THE BOOKMAN *will select a group of poems from the American periodicals. These will be submitted to a prominent poet or critic who will choose from them "The Poems of the Month", though he will be free to add any others he may prefer. Mr. Untermeyer will act as arbiter for March and April. The complete list of poems selected will be found in the Gossip Shop.*

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AMERICA AND THE YOUNG INTELLECTUAL

(An Answer to "The National Genius" in the January "Atlantic Monthly")

By Harold Stearns

IN "The Atlantic" for January Stuart P. Sherman has the leading article, called "The National Genius", which is somewhat of a misnomer inasmuch as the substance of the discussion is really a hortatory appeal to our younger artists and writers. The article is written with humor and vigor; it is extremely able and clear, setting forth a definite point of view the implications of which suggest a consistent philosophy of life. It is because Mr. Sherman makes articulate an attitude more or less consciously shared by the majority of what we may term the tolerant and enlightened part of the generation preceding us, and because, in common with a much larger group of the younger generation than Mr. Sherman suspects, I believe this attitude a rather tragically ill-informed one, that I have ventured to reply to it. The problem of America and, or as I should say, *versus* the young intellectual—and why, in the simplest sense of interest in intellectual things, should we hesitate to use the term? why should it carry with it a faint aura of effeminate gentility?—is of first-rate importance. Discussion of it illuminates many aspects of our cultural life. And never was it more timely than today.

Let me begin by stating as straightforwardly as I can Mr. Sherman's main contentions.

Mr. Sherman pictures himself at a typical American public dinner, which H. L. Mencken might characterize as a Rotary Club jubilee entirely controlled by rugged right-thinkers. At all events there is much talk of progress and efficiency, increased production, sanitation, and sobriety; and a future republic flowing with milk and honey so potent that everybody will then have a flivver, a phonograph and hundreds of classical records, a patent sewage system, and a wireless telephone, as well as an individual aeroplane to transport him from his immaculate home to his electric-tractor-plowed field or to his model factory. Churches and universities will flourish, and all the highroads be macadamized. Citizens of this ideal state will be diseaseless, active, moral, and above all prosperous. The picture of the future United States is the conventional roseate Utopia dreamed of by all forward-lookers and mechanical engineers. It is to be American through and through—that is, shot through and through with moral idealism.

Perhaps as an after-thought, the chairman of the dinner then calls upon a young literary artist "to sketch a place in our programme of democratic progress for art, music, literature, and the like—in short, for the superfluous things". The phrase grates on Mr. Sherman, as evidently it grated on the young "literary artist" in question. For this gentleman, whom Mr. Sherman makes the protagonist for all the younger generation of literary and artistic *révoltés*, then arises and delivers

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himself of the following blasts: (1) that the twin incubi of Democracy and Puritanism have made beauty a prostitute to utility, and that the younger generation of artists and writers has seen through the solemn humbug of a future ideal republic, envisaging the failure of civilization not only in the present but in the future; (2) that the said younger generation wants only to be emancipated from the kind of people that have spoken earlier at this dinner, for it imports its philosophy in fragments from beyond the borders of Anglo-Saxonia—from Ireland, Germany, France, and Italy, not forgetting to draw upon "the quick Semitic intelligence"; (3) that art is "letting oneself out completely and perfectly", and that the chief thing to let out is the long repressed sexual impulses, recently unearthed by that prince of psychologists Professor Sigmund Freud, for "most of the evil in the world is due to self-control".

Now the justness of this touching picture of the younger generation of artists and writers, I can hardly leave to Mr. Sherman's conscience. He may personally know individuals of the type described above, but I don't, and I frankly doubt if many such individuals exist. Certainly if they do, they are not typical. The picture Mr. Sherman has sketched is a caricature in the true sense of the word, i. e., a kernel of truth covered by different individual absurdities and weaknesses. The kernel of truth, of course, is in the depiction of the younger generation as in revolt against the right-thinkers and the forward-lookers. It *is* in revolt; it *does* dislike, almost to the point of hatred and certainly to the point of contempt, the type of people dominant in our present civilization, the people who actually "run things". I shall even go so far with Mr. Sherman as to agree that this is a thoroughly unfortunate state of affairs—unfortunate for the people who run things, but even more unfortunate for the youngsters. The fact of the hostility is not in dispute. But I do most vigorously dispute the reasons Mr. Sherman gives for its existence, the individual irresponsibility he implies. Quite the contrary is the case, as I shall try to show later. However, to return to the argument....

Mr. Sherman goes home rather sadly from this dinner, meditating on the folly of youth and reflecting on the love of notoriety in all ages. The Restoration fellows, too, he ponders, were likewise in revolt at the Puritans; they "let themselves out" with a vengeance; did not two wits and poets of good King Charles the Second's time strip themselves naked and run through the streets, singing lascivious songs? Yet somehow they did not count, these Restoration *révoltés;* they made no headway against "the sense of the whole English nation". They left no impress, and today hardly their names are remembered.

Mr. Sherman continues to meditate. Beauty, he says, whether we like it or not, has a heart full of service. It is impossible to separate art from the service to truth, morals, and democracy. Our forefathers were not "grim"; did they not envisage among the inalienable rights of mankind "the pursuit of happiness"? The artist must send us these moments of happiness and delight as often as he can; but he does so permanently and most truly not by divorcing himself from the moralities of our time and custom and inviting us to sensuous indulgence, but by kindling the austerer ministers till they glow with passion. Further, there is the whole question of the relation of the artist to society. Can an

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artist divorce himself from it, or be in fundamental revolt against its chief characteristics? Mr. Sherman thinks not. But then, what is the chief characteristic of American society? Its moral "idealism", he replies, adroitly quoting Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, even Mr. Spingarn and Mr. Dreiser, to prove that we have this vital national culture. Thus we come to the conclusion that the artist should try to make contacts with that national culture, fertilize it, and be fertilized by it. He should, so to speak, climb on the national band wagon of moral idealism and see that a few gracious æsthetic roses are festooned around it as it hurries along the hard road of ethical and material progress.

First of all, let me set down my points of agreement with Mr. Sherman. The problem of the relation of the artist and writer to the society in which he lives is a very old one, and, it seems to me, a great deal of nonsense is talked on both sides. Of course no artist can completely escape his *milieu*, and of course in one respect all great art is disinterested, timeless, equally true for all ages and all peoples, universal. Yet there is no real conflict here; and as in philosophy the problem of the one and the many, or unity in diversity, has, so to speak, only a speculative interest, so in life the artist, although expressing something universal, must do it with the materials, with the technique, and in the idiom of the particular time and country in which he finds himself. He will thus be disinterested in his art, or his form of generalizing the particular, only in proportion to the sharpness and keenness of his interest in the specific. He cannot in any final sense *put by* the civilization he lives in. And I think it basically true that a really great artist, or writer, will express the age to which he belongs. He will speak the language of all humanity, yet usually in a provincial accent. In this sense, I agree with Mr. Sherman. After all, great art is art of acceptance and fulfilment of life; rarely of repudiation and contempt, and never of indifference.

Here allow me a relevant digression. In "The Freeman" for the issue of the week of January 26 Albert Jay Nock, one of the editors, offers a few words of advice to Messrs. Sinclair Lewis, Floyd Dell, Sherwood Anderson, and Waldo Frank, whose latest novels—all of them dealing with contemporary American social life, and with the life of the middle west in particular—have appeared with a curious and provocative simultaneity. All of our novelists, Mr. Nock implies—and these younger men no less than the others—write with a certain preoccupation; they have not their inner eye on the central truth of the situation or the ultimate truth of the characters they depict, both of which are independent of time or place. They are preoccupied with the externals to the detriment of their art, which should concern itself solely with "great emotions, great spiritual experiences, great actions". Many of our older novelists, like Mr. Howells, were primarily concerned with niceness, as a different stamp, like William Allen White, are primarily concerned with morality and Americanism, so called. But the younger writers equally put their primary concern in disparagement of niceness, morality, and Americanism. Mr. Nock cites the example of Gogol in rebuttal to them all, Gogol, he says, although he lived in a régime of Russian despotism and bureaucratic stupidity beside which the recent ministrations of Mr. Palmer and Mr. Burleson in our own country appear the

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handiwork of mere amateurs, still contrived to do classic work, and he did it by ignoring that régime, by *putting by* the civilization he lived in. The qualities that distinguish his work are tenderness, disinterestedness, and *serenity*, and these qualities could express themselves in his work in spite of a hostile environment. Let Messrs. Lewis, Dell, Anderson, and Frank go and do likewise, is Mr. Nock's advice. Let them also forget their environment in the sense in which Gogol did; let them not be preoccupied with it to the extent of allowing it to impinge, even for a moment, on their art. They can do classic work no matter if the republic falls, and the Japanese occupy California, and the Mexicans, New Orleans.

Now although it would no doubt be an excellent thing if our young novelists captured some of the qualities that distinguish Gogol's work—that is, if they came by those qualities honestly and not imitatively—I cannot help feeling that Mr. Nock is giving advice where it is not needed, namely, to geniuses. Provided Messrs. Lewis, Dell, Anderson, and Frank are geniuses, they will not need Mr. Nock's advice anyway; provided they are not geniuses, it cannot do them any ultimate good. Neither I, nor Mr. Nock, nor Mr. Sherman, need to worry about the real genius when he appears; he will be amply able to look after himself. He will ignore his environment, or repudiate it, or challenge it, or change it, as he pleases. Furthermore, I also cannot help feeling that Gogol's genius, great as it was, was a rather narrow and special one; and that the truly great artist does not *put by* his contemporary civilization, but that he reflects and justifies it. One thinks of Pericles, and Shakespeare, and Rabelais—universal, to be sure, yet each one impossible in himself without his peculiar age and civilization. For strive as we will to put æsthetic values at the top of the ethical hierarchy (and I confess I think that is where they belong), in order to be at that top, there must be something under them. A man is a man and a citizen even before he is an artist; and in the work of the highest genius, it seems to me, all the claims of these different sides of life are coordinated and unified.

Yet in any event, whatever the question about a special type of genius, such as Gogol, ignoring his civilization, or about whether the highest type of genius does or does not ignore it (and I certainly believe he does not), there can be no question at all that the young intellectual, the person not a genius yet with a certain competence and a real interest in humanistic things, *must* give heed to it. He will, perforce, be a part of the social and economic and educational machinery of the country, albeit it may be only a dissentient part. He will be interested in politics, in contemporary literature, in the type of university life we possess, in science, in art and the American theatre, in the labor movement. He cannot, and will not wish to, escape any of these interests. There will be the insistent problem of making a living in an environment where, admittedly, interest in intellectual things can hardly be said to yield quick or high dividends. Above all there will be, as Mr. Sherman himself says, quoting from the forefathers, "the pursuit of happiness". As a rational individual he will desire for himself a happy, or as Aristotle puts it, the "good" life. He will recognize that he is a social animal, and will try to find expression of and satisfaction for those sides of his nature. But he

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will likewise recognize the core of irreducible individualism that remains, the spiritual integrity as a separate entity that cannot be destroyed. And the happy life will be for him the life in which these two legitimate claims are harmonized and reenforce one another. Thus far I can go along with Mr. Sherman, and I fancy he would agree with the general propositions advaced in this paragraph.

The trouble comes when we try to apply these general principles concretely. What is the national culture which the young man finds confronting him in America today, and what are types of leaders of that culture with whom he is supposed to make contact? Mr. Sherman describes that culture as one predominantly of a long and vigorous tradition, still in active functioning, of moral idealism. He hesitates to name the leaders of it—that is, the contemporary leaders, for there is a sentimental passage about Lincoln which by implication suggests that his spirit still lives in his successors.

It is not my business to quarrel with Mr. Sherman about what really constitutes American national culture, although I believe he is thoroughly wrong in his judgment. As well as a single phrase can describe it, our genuine national culture, I think, is one of almost belligerent individualism. To be sure, a certain pioneer social docility went with this, for in a new country, where living was precarious and dangerous, all within the group had to conform if it was to be successful in its adventure. When, nevertheless, the pressure of that social conformity became too great to be endured, the individual could always go west, either alone or with his family. He could strike out for himself, and lead the kind of life he chose, worship God as he chose. Precisely this type of adventurous pioneers, unafraid of the hazard of new dangers, did people our country: it is their spirit, I think, which still constitutes the real American national genius, however much that genius may be smothered and thwarted today in a land that is rapidly filling up and that has already passed the turn from an agrarian to an industrial nation. A good many of the younger generation would be glad to see a return to that early sturdy individualism; I myself think affectionately of my New England forefathers who kept their blunderbuss well polished and hung in a conspicuous place on the wall, ready for highly individualistic use against the exactions of any too tyrannical government.

However, forgetting for the moment the question of tradition, what are the facts? Will Mr. Sherman seriously maintain that he finds a genuine moral idealism dominating the country today? Surely he is not so naive as to confuse the reformistic and "uplift" tendencies of our national life—the Pollyanna optimism; prohibition; blue laws; exaggerated reverence for women; home and foreign missions; Protestant clericalism—with anything a civilized man can legitimately call moral idealism. If he looks things squarely in the face, he must recognize these manifestations of American life as in no way related to moral idealism; they are the fine flower of timidity and fear and ignorance. If Mr. Sherman were not so hostile to Freudian psychology that he persistently refuses to understand it (if ever there was a scientific justification of the ethical need of restraint, it is to be found there), I should point out to him that this so-called "moral idealism" is merely what any good psychiatrist would instantly recognize as the morbid perversities

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which conventionally accompany a deeply dissatisfied human life. For it hardly needs arguing that moral idealism begins with intelligence; the trouble with what Mr. Sherman is pleased to describe as American moral idealism is simply that it is illiterate —it is on the same basis of reasoning as that of a fanatic who says that because there is adultery in the world, we should kill off all women, or because there is murder, we should cease to make knives and pistols. It is the moral idealism of outward compulsion as against the moral idealism of inner restraint; the moral order that comes from authority as against the moral order that comes from freedom. Which does Mr. Sherman really prefer?

It is significant that he does not mention the leaders of this national culture. Let me be specific. Suppose a young man, just out of college and returned to his moderate-sized home town in Ohio (why not Marion?), honestly tries to make those contacts with the national culture which Mr. Sherman so vigorously urges him to make. First he tries business; where will he find the idealistic business man with a vision of a future great moral republic—I mean a real vision and not a hypocritical pretense put on for the sake of the neighbors? Next he tries politics; where can he in fact go but to those leaders who took a local pride in rolling up a big majority for Brother Warren? Then he tries reform and the labor movement; can he go to a better place than to the leader of the local Woman's Christian Temperance Union and possibly to the enthusiastic local manager of a national "Open Shop" campaign? Finally, he tries music, art, and literature; but here my hand falters, the picture is too pathetic. Perhaps he ignores all these activities; he wants merely to live a gracious, and amiable, and civilized life for himself, to be part of an interesting and intellectual social group and do his work honestly within it, forgetting the harshness of the environment. Frankly, has he one chance in a hundred? Does Mr. Sherman seriously imagine Mr. Anderson being fertilized by contact with his congressman? myself (if he knew my liking for wine) being enlightened by talking with Mr. Volstead? Mr. Lewis becoming civilized by long conference with Dr. Wilbur F. Crafts?

No, what the young intellectual actually finds is that moral idealism is precisely what the institutional life of America today does *not* want. For moral idealism, if it means anything, means fearlessness before the facts and willingness to face them, intellectual integrity, emotional honesty, the attempt to win a moral order out of the jungle of experience without bias, without any ax to grind, without native prejudice. This kind of moral idealism the younger generation has in large measure; and it is just this kind of moral idealism which the younger generation finds nowhere existent in American national life today. The whole drift and direction of our national life, under the control of a malignant and stupid minority, fears this kind of moral idealism as it fears hell itself. In our national life today the young intellectual speedily finds that *he is not wanted.* And particularly he is not wanted if he strives to accomplish just those objects, which in the abstract Mr. Sherman would be the first to praise—I mean intellectual integrity and personal honesty before the facts of life.

Mr. Sherman should try to put the problem to himself as concretely as I have attempted here sketchily to do.

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If he did, possibly he would avoid his most serious blunder of all—the notion that the young *révoltés* are merely so for the sake of personal indulgence, and because they find moral discipline irksome. Nothing could be more grotesque. They revolt simply at the hollowness and hypocrisy of the standards they are supposed to worship. They revolt not in order to avoid discipline, but in order to take the first step toward a real discipline, i. e., a discipline based as far as may be on the truth. They do not revolt for the fun of it, even if a few—Roosevelt invented the phrase "lunatic fringe", and like almost every other group the younger men have theirs—appear to do so. They revolt because they passionately want the opportunity to do honest work, serious work, intelligent work. And they know, what Mr. Sherman for all his scholarship seems never to have learned, that such work is impossible unless they are free, and futile unless the civilization it occurs in welcomes it.

Critics have often wondered why we have not produced "great" art and literature. Perhaps here we have the explanation. I have already hinted my own belief that great art is the expression of an age, and that age must itself be great. Ours is not; it has nothing to express. This in itself would be nothing much to weep over; many ages have been fallow. But it is discouraging to find this curiously persistent hostility on the part of the older generation (of course in point of view, not necessarily in age) toward all of the younger generation's attempt to make our national life a little nearer to greatness—to make it more honest, more fearless, more intellectually straightforward, more humanly free, more rational. Of course our young intellectuals waste much time in discovering the hollowness of our institutions; of course their tone is often fretful and peevish; of course there are always those to identify freedom with mere running away from life and playing like a happy animal. Yet surely a man of Mr. Sherman's intelligence and sympathy should be able to discern the reality beneath the appearance. The fact remains, he does not; and when I say he, I think of the whole class he represents. Even the intelligent and tolerant desert us. Can we be blamed if we suspect that beneath the ostensible reasons lie others —fear primarily, fear that an honest attempt to understand our point of view might make them deeply uncomfortable and dissatisfied? It is only a suspicion, but it is a growing one. Meanwhile let Mr. Sherman reflect upon it while we of the younger generation make our plans for leaving the country of our birth and early affections. We do not want to cut ourselves off from our national life, but we are inexorably being forced to do it—many of us shall probably starve when we go to some alien country, but at least we shall be able, spiritually, to breathe.

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A TALK WITH CHARLES DICKENS'S OFFICE BOY

William Edrupt of London

By Catherine Van Dyke

MUFFINS, Muffins, hot Muffins! Crumpets Ho, Crumpets Ho! Who'll buy my Crumpets Ho!" With many a twist and quaver the muffin man gurgled the merits of his wares, and emphasized his cry with a bell whose vigorous ring made the great tray balanced on his head fairly teeter. Yet owing to some bylaw of gravity especially made for London criers, the tray maintained its balance as if, muffins and all, it were a hirsute appendage of the muffin man himself.

The whole of Fetter Lane rang with his cry. The quaint alley of old London where I had come to see Mr. Edrupt, former office boy of Charles Dickens, was filled with teatime folk hobbling or toddling in all the seven ages of man, and goodness knows how many of women. Heads were muffled in shawls. The air was cold, despite the warm look of the yellow fog that wrapped the alley in a sort of pea-soup twilight in which its inhabitants wandered dimly after the muffin man like a crowd of merry ghosts.

Pennies rang on the big tray, and with crumpet or muffin secured the alley mates scurried back to the various niches, niches that only a cat or a Londoner could call home. From each opening door-gap came the chirp of a kettle, a merry high-diddle-diddle kettle, the faery of the English hearth.

"Come in, madam, pray come in," pressed Mr. Edrupt after I passed under the low mediæval arch that led to the little house whose ground floor made his parlor bedroom. William Edrupt stood up to the dignity of his eighty years, his back slightly rounded like that of the Windsor chair he offered me, while his eye twinkled steadily.

His own kettle on the hob was of an operatic turn. I took the long two-pronged fork and held my crumpet close to the red embers, while Mr. Edrupt set about making tea in the glazed pot according to the recipe, "so stiff the spoon could stand upright".

His little room held all the treasures of eighty years of small comforts. Today his record is almost unique. Here is an office boy who didn't want to be boss, and who didn't turn out a millionaire. He remained content as an office boy until almost middle-aged, when he became a gate man of the Temple. I looked down at his boots and thought I had seen none blacker nor better shined in all London. The gleam of the boots led my eye to a polished copper penny with a hole through its middle, guarding a place of honor on the centre of the mantel. Mr. Edrupt smiled.

"My master, Mr. Dickens, gave it to me the first year I was his office boy. I was just a small lad about eight years as I remember, when he picked me out of the lot who applied for the job. My mother took me to him not because she was a reading body and knew Mr. Dickens's books—she had thirteen children and never read a line —but because boys had to go to work

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early in those days, and she had heard Mr. Dickens was a good master. I remember quite plainly my mother looking down at me and saying, 'William is a good boy, Sir.' Mr. Dickens looked hard at me and laughed. 'I am almost afraid of good boys', he said, 'but I think William is not so bad as all that.'

"I grew up in the office, running his errands to printers, carrying his packages—he was always sending off something to somebody. Sometimes I was sent out to fetch ices, of which he ate considerable, though he ate very lightly of everything else. Sometimes when he had written hours without stopping, he would suddenly jump up and bid me go out to the street with him; and then we would walk and walk. I'd stand it as long as I could! Then I'd tell him my legs ached and we would come right home and have a cake.

"I think Mr. Dickens was a man who lived a lot by his nose. He seemed to be always smelling things. When we walked down by the Thames he would sniff and sniff—'I love the very smell of this,' he used to say.

"Now, I am not a reading man myself," Mr. Edrupt warmed my tea with a fresh bit, "but I think Mr. Dickens liked my not being one. 'Have you read anything of mine yet, William my boy?' he used to ask me. 'No, Sir,' I'd answer, and he would slap me on the back and laugh every time. One day he asked me, 'William do you know what a jinnee is?'

"'Yes, Sir,' I answered proudly; 'they say *you* are one.' Mr. Dickens threw back his head and laughed and laughed and then rushed out to tell a friend. I did not know till long after that what I had heard people call him was a *genius* and not a *jinnee*.

"Now about that penny." Mr. Edrupt's eye met mine and he went back to his story, for his mind was almost too richly full of memories to dwell long on one.

"I went to Mr. Dickens's first at the office of 'All the Year Round' in Wellington Street. He had a bedroom fitted up there and used sometimes to spend the night when he lectured or took part in theatricals. He did that often, but I don't think he ever spent a night away from home when he could help it, for no man loved his home better.

"When Mr. Dickens wrote 'Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings' three hundred thousand copies were sold in the magazine—a great sale in those days. The street in front of the office was crowded with folks wanting to know the end of the story. There were big posters up all over the town, and I was fairly bursting with pride, for I knew how hard Mr. Dickens worked at it. I loved all his successes, though I don't think he cared anything about them so long as his work was done. Sometimes he would scarcely eat or sleep when beginning a new book. But when the pages covered with writing began to pile up, I knew that pretty soon he would ease off considerably. Sometimes after Mr. Dickens had written for hours I would get him a bucket of cold water, and he would put his head into it and sometimes his hands. Then he would dry his head with a towel and go on writing.

"Well, folks everywhere were betting considerably on the end of 'Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings'. It came out at Christmas time. One real sharp man tried to have me get Mr. Dickens to tell the end of the story. He intended to sell out the news and make bets on it. I asked Mr. Dickens and he, knowing I had never read the story, questioned me until I told him the man had offered me sixpence to try and find out what was going to happen."

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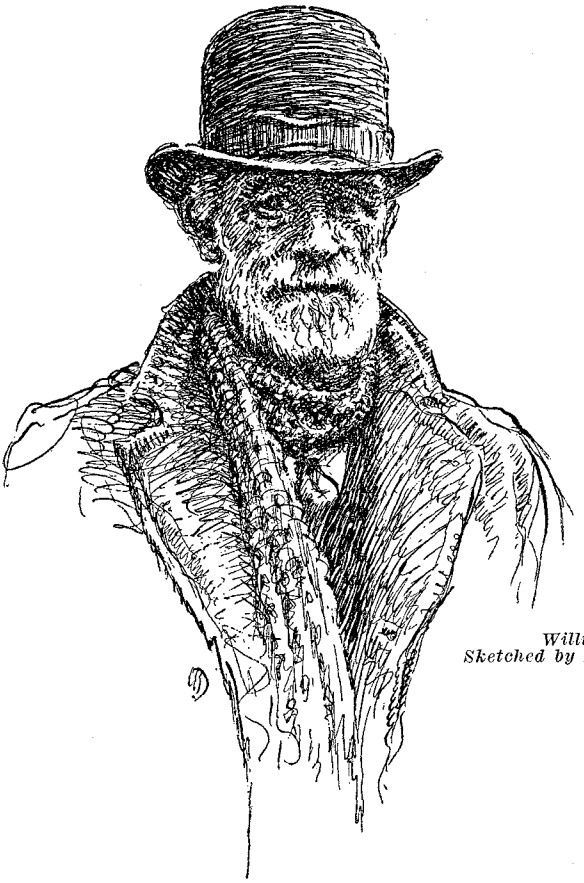

William Edrupt
Sketched by Fred Lewis

"Mr. Dickens", the old man continued, "gave me three shillings a week, and every time my Ma had a new baby (which was often) he advanced me a shilling, but having to give it home, I could only keep twopence a week for myself. My master knew this, and that the sixpence the man offered to me for telling the end of the story meant a lot to me; but when I told him the man wanted to sell out the happenings to others, he said, 'Come here William, boy,' and he took me on his knee. 'I'll give you sixpence now for yourself, and I'll give you this penny with a hole in it if you promise me to keep it for good and ever, but you tell that scoundrel that I say the end of the story is *this—they all die sooner or later.*'

"Mr. Dickens's looks?" (in answer to my question). "He was one of the best dressed men you could ever see, downright stylish. Everything he had was always of the very best, and he took the greatest care of his things in every way. I never saw a spot on anything, his clothes or his desk. I used to think his gloves beautiful as any lady's. I used to tidy up his desk; but it was always tidier before I touched it, I think. His notes and books and papers were always left just right. He wrote with a quill. I was not allowed to sharpen it.

"I never saw Mr. Dickens angry

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with anyone who dealt fair with others, though he could get in a terrible rage over anyone who did a mean thing. He could remember everything in a really wonderful way. Sometimes gentlemen would tell me addresses to bring parcels to and I would forget them, but even if it were a week after Mr. Dickens heard them in the office he could name the street and number. He was also very prompt—never a moment late in anything; and when I was late I got scolded for it.

"Oh, yes, of course, I saw lots of writers coming and going out of the office and oftentimes I went to their homes but", Mr. Edrupt paused, "I never took any notice of them. Once I was carrying Mr. Dickens's bag to the station when he was going to his home in Kent, and another boy said to me, 'Who are those two men looking in the front of that shop window?'

" 'The one in the checked trousers, velvet coat, and soft hat is the Premier, Mr. Disraeli,' I told him; 'the other is my master.' They were both laughing at a cartoon of 'Dizzy' as we called him with his head stuck on a broomstick.

"Mr. Dickens's family often came to the office. I remember Mrs. Dickens well. She was very stout and could hardly get her crinoline through the door. My master loved his children. He loved all children, but his own he fair adored; he would stop work and turn right round and spend his whole afternoon with them. Sometimes he'd take me, and we'd all go on an outing.

"Many people ask if Mr. Dickens was a great eater, as they say he always put such a lot of things in his books about eating—all sorts of feasts and good dinners, they tell me. He wasn't but a light eater himself."...

Outside the small room, I stepped into the Strand. The fog had cleared somewhat of its yellow grey and I could not but imagine how Dickens might have portrayed the London of today, its abrupt contrast against the dimness of the mediæval. Before me was the black timbered "Ye Cheshire Cheese", where Samuel Johnson, the shadowing Boswell, and his friends supped on larks' pie and wit when times were good and, as poor Goldsmith might have vouched, on just wit when times weren't. Dickens, too, and his cronies had their evenings here, and most who have trod Fleet Street know its hearty fare. To my right gleamed a shop brilliant with electric foot-warmers. In the middle of the Strand roaring with its evening traffic the Church of St. Clements Dane stood islanded, reminder of the days when London was the centre of Denmark. Dim set above it, the London-Paris Air Express was concluding its daily trip. Around me were the streets with names Dickens must have loved: Magpie Alley; Glasshouse Alley; Hanging Sword Alley. Each held its magic. A motor lorry stood before the building where once rose the Magpie and Stump to which the laundress directed Mr. Pickwick in his search for one Perkers, clerk. Motor scooters scooted, autos honked, Little Nells crept shyly past and Little Dorrits, their shawls drawn over their heads. David Copperfields aglow with romance sauntered from the great newspaper offices that tower here in the medley. Was that Oliver Twist far over in the dimness of the bridge arching the Thames, with an old thick man scurrying after him? Yet in all this background, so reminiscent of Charles Dickens, nothing gave such a vivid glow to his memory as did William Edrupt—who doesn't yet quite understand why all the rest of the world is interested in his master's books!

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MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT

(Winner of the O. Henry Memorial Short Story Prize—1920)

By Blanche Colton Williams

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE" contained in the issue for July, 1915, a short story entitled "The Water-Hole". It was signed by a name hitherto unknown in fiction—Maxwell Struthers Burt. The narrative at once implicitly promised to reward the reader for his outlay of time and energy, promised by a beginning that definitely conveyed the shaping up of material and subtly suggested forces drawing together for action.

As the story progressed it pictured the shimmering Arizona desert under a steel-blue sky, in a heat so intense "the horn of the saddle burned your hand". It recounted a search for hidden treasure, abandoned when, through two logical mishaps, the water supply failed. It described realistically the tortures of thirst, assuaged the torture, and pointed the climax at the water-hole. No other than a man who knows adventure at first hand in the great west could have written the tale; nor other than one whose past had been spent among books and ideas.

The hero of "The Water-Hole" is represented as telling his story to three classmates. At the end is the twist of surprise which links the narrator with the love element, delicately inwoven. Only by the surprise does the author disclose his apprenticeship, and that may have been, admissibly, a concession to the fashion in fiction. By every hallmark the story is the sure product of the craftsman.

"The Water-Hole" was the forerunner of other stories, nearly all of which combine the mountains and plains of the west with the club life of the east, stories of restaurants where men get together over glasses of—leave it at that, over glasses—and the most exotic food; or where ladies and gentlemen gather in a dining room around impeccable linen, plate, and crystal. As his west identifies Mr. Burt with adventure, so the east identifies him with gentlefolk. The first quality in his fiction is truth to life as he knows it, life envisioned through the temperamental lens of the artist.

Of a Philadelphia family, Mr. Burt was born in Baltimore, October 18, 1882. "I am an *echt*-Philadelphian," he says of himself, "bred in the bone for many generations; but since the age of eighteen, when I went to college, I have been what I think is called 'an escaped Philadelphian'. My family still live there, but I don't."

He was educated in private schools in Philadelphia, "very badly", he thinks, "as most men of my generation were". Getting through school somewhat earlier than is usual, he worked for two years as reporter on the Philadelphia "Times", under the man who had been private secretary to Lincoln, Colonel A. K. McClure.

At the tender age of sixteen the boy was probably the youngest Philadelphia reporter in newspaper days of hard drinking and fakes. "My last week I had one murder, two suicides,

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and three fires, if I remember correctly," he says. "I don't think that was very good for a boy of seventeen."

When he was old enough he went to Princeton, where in 1904 he took his bachelor's degree; later to Munich for a year, then to Merton College, Oxford. Throughout his prose and poetry the academic shadows of Princeton and Oxford towers lie lightly over the brave exploits of his heroes, subduing their adventures to a mellowness never approached by unmodified high lights of risk and hazard. To Princeton, Mr. Burt avows himself indebted even for his love of nature or appreciation of nature in certain phases. In "Gifts"[1] he lists a number of things he has learned from his alma mater: warm winds bringing elm scent; love of the sun, open fields and windy weather, and love of bells across the fields at dusk.

He intended to take a degree at Oxford, but when a vacancy occurred at Princeton they called him back to teach and there he remained for three years. He had already won distinction in student days, "being very much mixed up in the Triangle Club, for which I wrote two librettos".

Meantime, while teaching, he spent his summers in the west, gradually acquiring interests in various ranches. Ultimately, he settled in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where he owns a partnership in Ranch Bar B. C. As the nomenclature indicates, this is a cattle ranch. Another, the partners devote to "dude ranching". For the uninitiated Mr. Burt patiently explains that a "dude" is a non-resident of a country; the word carries with it none of the contemptuous connotation of "tenderfoot". A "dude ranch" is a sort of glorified summer hotel, where people are given horses, taught the ways of the west, and taken on pack trips.

Mr. Burt's summer home, his much wandering over the west, and his wide interests, account for his pictures and his knowledge: of the blazing heat of Arizona, its rattlesnakes and scorpions; of the Big Cloud river region, its groves of aspen trees delicate in ghostly silver; of the Pelly lakes and the river Frances, its black rocks upjutting through the white spray of its falls; of the Southern Wyoming desert, its "yellow and red buttes and stunted cactus; all of it under a sky of piercing blueness". Out there men drive cattle in blizzards over grey expanses of sage brush; or in time of drought see them die stark mad while "dust devils dance along the ridge". Out there, too, men know peace under slumberous fir tops; or under myriad hosts of tall pines, white under the magic of the moon.

The Jackson Hole country is the most beautiful in the United States, he thinks. And in this view he is supported by the testimony of the late Colonel Roosevelt and of Owen Wister.

Mr. Burt's love of contrast, of widely dissimilar states and kingdoms, urges him to know life from opposing outlooks and to mirror their diversity in his art. When tired of his ranch, when desirous of gayety, he turns like the narrator of "The Glory of the Wild Green Earth"[2] to the east. "I wanted to come back to the unexpected quiet and aloofness of a club," says he, "to low-voiced, well-scrubbed servants; to a bed of cool sheets, to a morning of a valet and a porcelain tub and new and beautiful clothes." If he becomes nostalgic for the west, he turns again to

> ...the great
> Scarred beauty of a lonely land, and seeks
> Ever to keep renewed an hundred dreams,

[1] In the High Hills. Houghton Mifflin Co. 1914.

[2] John O'May. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1918.

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Of plains that brood by wide unwearying streams,
Of how archangels hold red sunset peaks,
Winged with a flaming splendor desolate.

This love of the west is inherited, as his love for the conventions is bred in the bone. His great-grandfather, he suspects, must have been some sort of Sinn Feiner, for, having to leave Ireland between sun down and sun up, he turned fur trader in the west. Then there was an uncle who, when he left Princeton, became a cattle man in Arizona and California. It was from this uncle that Max Burt learned when he was eight years of age how to throw a rope, an art he never forgot.

Between the indoor comforts of civilization and the outdoor thrills of the rancher's life, Mr. Burt experiences a *joie de vivre* that manifests itself minutely and concretely in his poems and his prose. Though he loves the mountain peaks—"big ones, with snow"—and pine forests better than anything else in the world, he waits not upon them but finds contentment in a lake between the hills, surrounded by sedges, murmurous with bees. He savors the immediate sweetness of damp hay, or a garden wet with showers, with as keen relish as he whiffs the air blown cold from the snow-capped Tetons.[3]

In his love for nature he is a descendant of Wordsworth, as in his modernity he is a kinsman of Rupert Brooke and Alfred Noyes. He must have delighted in the rhythm of "Grantchester" before composing his sprightly "Spring in Princeton", which celebrates the Jersey meadows—golden with daffodil, resonant with bird song—and the little town of towers "silvery gray and high":

There as the sun folds down its wings,
On every lawn a robin sings,
And kindly people take their tea,
Under an elm or maple tree.

It is this same poem which captures a picturesque moment of New York:

I think there's nothing like at dark
To see the lamps in Central Park
Turn yellow in the purple gloom
To huge gold lilies dripping bloom;
And watch the great walls through the night
Ripple to towers of fabulous light.

Other verses ring echoes of Mr. Noyes, as these from "The Flute-Player":

And barrel organs everywhere
Make songs for little children's feet,
And, O, the chestnut trees are sweet!

With Mr. Noyes he has more than a passing acquaintance, as one may infer from the fact that he and the English poet are coeditors of "A Book of Princeton Verse" (1916).

Although it is true that the greater number of his poems proclaim Mr. Burt the celebrant of external nature, even as his stories declare him, yet a few of subjective mood reveal him the nature mystic, interested in the soul of nature, as his stories show him concerned in essential human character, half concealed under the outer man. After the death of a loved sister, Jean Brooke Burt, an author of promise who died July 4, 1918, he published a series of sonnets entitled "Resurgam". In the final one, the fifth, he has an equivalent of Shelley's, "He is made one with Nature", in the line, "All this, I know, is part of your new dream". Yet he is not successful in achieving the faith of the nature mystic, as Wordsworth was successful. Rain, which he loves to consider objectively, becomes a cold and dreary thing in his quatrain, "Question".

Of fantasy he has a gift like that of the earlier American, Joseph Rodman Drake—a gift which enables him to write, in "Märchen", of

A little man with cap of red,
And horn-brown lamp of glow-worm light.

[3]See, passim, Songs and Portraits. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1920.

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This dower of fantasy, again, rises to imaginative heights in his story, "Wings of the Morning", which suggests the return of a ghostly aviator. More artificially and less happily it appears in "Fishing", in an Oscar Wilde strain:

> Beside the kitchen stove the cat
> Blinked twice with eyes of gold,
> And yawned with infinite contempt,
> For sleep is new, and old is fishing;
> on the Nile,
> Once with mysterious, feline guile,
> In moon-lit, temple-shadowed bays,
> Were caught bright fins, in other days.

It is not possible to find in Wilde's "The Sphinx" a stanza of which this is reminiscent, but the resemblance in subject-matter and rhythm is unmistakable. The title of the poem intimates another interest of the author, quite in keeping with his expressed love for fly fishing and camping out.

The folk of Mr. Burt's poems are treated much in the same way as those of his stories. Poem and story express his feeling for nature; they show his opinion of people to be conditioned on intellectual appraisal. Mr. Latimer, of the poems, has his counterpart in Sir John Masters, of "A Cup of Tea" (in "John O'May"); each is able to buy his mood or his heart's desire—and yet not quite successfully. Uncle Jim, of the poems, he who came to a marvelous harmony with the hills, has for his prose parallels the seekers and wanderers in "Closed Doors", "Le Panache" and "A Cup of Tea".

In poems to his family there is an affectionate linking of the human being and nature. One need hardly read Mr. Burt's own words about his wife, "Fortunately she loves the west as much as I do", to be aware of this truth after reading "K. N. B." (in "Songs and Portraits"), and various other lines in which reference to her is evident. Then, of course, Mrs. Burt's "The Branding Iron" and "Hidden Creek" speak for her love of the open. "Primavera: To My Daughter upon Reaching Four" ends on a picture of himself and the child walking afield to trace out the piping of Pan.

Maxwell Struthers Burt met Katharine Newlin at Oxford, in 1912, while he was on a vacation from his ranch. They were married in 1913. "Our families had known each other always," Mr. Burt remarks, "but apparently it was necessary for us to go to Oxford to meet. There is a tradition that two writers do badly to get married to each other, but that certainly has not been the case with us. My wife is my most useful critic and I trust I am hers. We are very savage with each other, but that doesn't seem to hurt our feelings."

Mr. Burt's psychological interest in men and women remains his greatest asset for his narrative. In "Closed Doors" the narrator says of Murray that he should have been on his way to being a great painter; but he wasn't. Hewitt explains.

> "The fault lies in the boy's character", he spluttered. "How the devil can you paint a portrait when you can't get inside, and don't want to get inside your subject's mind? When you don't know what getting inside a mind is? Sense of beauty? Oh, yes, he's got a marvelous sense of beauty; but you can't even paint a great landscape unless you have a perception of humanity. In the end, as in everything else, you've got to know the taste of blood and smell of sweat."

It is the recognition of this truth joined to his love of the outer world which gives depth and beauty to the fiction of Mr. Burt.

His stories are, as he occasionally implies, biographies. A unique character gives him material for a series of chronological incidents all bearing on the man's individuality. So far, with one illustrious exception, his chief characters are men. These inci-

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dents rise to a nominal climax, as notably in "Le Panache" and "John O'May", to the death of the hero, but leave the reader wondering, questioning about him whose life has been partly bared and so irretrievably ended. You would have liked to know these men, you say; yet you are rather sure you never would have understood them. Herein is another of Mr. Burt's greatest gifts; by his power to suggest, by his challenge to the imagination he induces the reader to construct and to collaborate.

For at least a few critics "Le Panache" stands one of the best biographical stories of the decade. Though arguing that Hugh Craig might serve as the hero for a whole novel, one must admit that his portrait is as complete as one need wish or as a longer work could make it. He is a riddle man, one seldom attempted, never solved. The utmost an author can do is to record him, and to emphasize his ideal. This ideal is that of Cyrano de Bergerac, who hoped when he died "to sweep the floor of heaven with the plumes of his hat—his *panache*"; to keep such hope, Craig would wear a plume immaculate.

Mr. Burt's "story", then, is the life of a man or woman illuminated by a series of vivid flashes or by a single steady light.

Poignancy he achieves by denying a character something, the deprivation of which, under similar circumstances, would sadden him. Sir John Masters fell short of being a gentleman, as he also missed the love of the woman he had technically won. Knowing the magnificent villain has failed in a vital way, the reader cannot but pay him the tribute of pity, in spite of the contempt Burnaby justly manifests. John O'May, like Henry James's man of "The Beast in the Jungle", missed the great thing—though what it was, or might have been, for John is difficult to say.

Perhaps the author relies too greatly upon the principle, "To determine your character's behavior at the crisis, put yourself in his place". Not that the portraits are less objective, but the initial presentation appears to spring from a single significant meeting or concept and to round to completion through the author's studying his own reflection. Sir John would hardly permit the self-betrayal set forth in "A Cup of Tea".

In 1917 Mr. Burt entered the army as a private in the Aviation Service. The only story he published the year of the armistice, "Wings of the Morning" ("Scribner's", July, 1918; reprinted in "John O'May"), in its soaring quality and exalted mood achieved after serious study of apparently earth-anchored Ann Graham, might be the narrative symbol of one who had learned superbly to wing the ether after trial runs over shard and clod. The war was not without meaning to the art of this author in other respects, as may best be found by reference to "Shining Armor" ("Harper's", July, 1919) and "The Blood Red One" ("Scribner's", November, 1919). The indirection of these tales, pursued through a means half allegorical, wholly idealistic, becomes a fine directness.

His fiction of 1920 reverts to his earlier manner, with a curiously provocative predominance of the "culture" element. "A Dream or Two" ("Harper's", May, 1920), and " 'Bally Old' Knott" ("Scribner's", August, 1920) employ foreign settings and more than elsewhere show him to be of the literary family of Henry James, Edith Wharton, and John Galsworthy. His further kinship with them

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emerges in mood, deliberation, and easy dignity of sentence rhythm.

"Each in His Generation" ("Scribner's", July, 1920) swings back to an eastern city—possibly New York—for its setting; and reveals the antagonism between successive generations, for its struggle or dramatic element. One may read to find the outcome of the conflict between temporal periods and race, or merely to find out whether Uncle Henry left his money to Adrian; but only a jejune reader would be satisfied with the latter, the outward, "story". In it originality, in its tour de force dramatization of a subjective theme, and in its technical finish, it is near the peak of the author's accomplishments. The Committee of Award of the O. Henry Memorial Prize, offered by the Society of Arts and Sciences of New York City, adjudged "Each in His Generation" the best story of the year. It therefore receives the first prize of five hundred dollars for the best story by an American published in America in 1920.[4]

Mr. Burt's sympathies and likes occur frequently throughout this recapitulation. Lest he seem, like a certain famous duchess, to have "a heart too soon made glad, too easily impressed", it is well to notice that he hates with exceeding definiteness a few things: "socialism, except as a club held over other forms of government; prohibition; militarism; land and water promoters (this comes from living in the west); automobiles; dirty campers (this includes picnickers who leave newspapers); and most churches ending in 'ist. Not the individuals belonging to them, but the policy of the churches. I think the last is perhaps the most serious question confronting America today, and I cannot understand why more people don't see it. Accentuated by the war, we are in for a knock-down fight between the sons of darkness and the sons of light. It's an age-long struggle. At present, the sons of darkness —materialism, hatred of beauty, narrowness, an unwitting socialism of the most irksome kind—are winning, and it seems to me that the biggest job any writer can undertake is to combat them, not by tracts, of course, not even with them very much in his mind, but by his attitude and everything he does. We have the loveliest country in the world, we are trying to make it materially and spiritually the most unlovely."

[4]A second prize of two hundred fifty dollars is awarded to Frances Noyes Hart for her story, "Contact!" published in "Pictorial Review", December, 1920, as by Frances Newbold Noyes.

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THE ALLEGED CULTURE OF NEW ENGLAND

By Richard Burton

IF the adage be true that a man is known by the company he keeps, then reading should reveal the man,—for books are only gifted fellow humans talking to us. The reading of an individual or a locality should throw light upon those reactions to the things of the mind and the spirit which we group under the time-honored name of culture.

In trying to appraise this culture, we must sternly eliminate what might be called professional relation to books. Valuable as it may be, and broadening in its effect, it is never quite like that pleasurable, more instinctive contact with letters which implies free choice, and joy as a goal. A memory out of childhood rises up to offer me an illustration.

I see a lad perched on the top rung of a tall ladder in his clergyman father's library, so as to get at the volumes of the uppermost shelves, and immersed in no less a tome than d'Aubigné's "History of the Reformation". But not in the text, far from it; in the very gruesome pictures with which that important work teemed, showing the many burnings-alive engaged in by a church zealous to remind her enemies of wrath to come and furnish them a foretaste of brimstone on earth. A normal boy is a truculent little animal, and I fear I took an unholy, shuddering delight in these depictions. They seemed to shed some light on a conundrum I had recently heard: "Which would you prefer as a death, the guillotine or fire?", the answer being: "Fire, since a hot steak is better than a cold chop".

But there was puzzle in my young mind, too; how could my kind-hearted reverend father wish to acquire such literature? It seemed out of character. I was glad he *did* have such a book; but how did such literature square with his profession? I had not lived long enough to see that a volume on the Protestant reformation as part of church history, was an essential item in his study. And thus the practitioner in every walk of life will have books that are tools rather than beloved companions.

The culture of New England is a tradition. We all know that there was a day when American literature was New England literature; they were practically coterminous. The august names of Emerson, Hawthorne, Holmes, Thoreau, Lowell, Whittier, and Longfellow stood so intensely for that section of the land, that even a great artist like Poe appeared a little like an alien (though, by accident, he was born in Boston); and as for Walt Whitman, when he came along later, he was a barbarian in the outer darkness of Long Island. Mark Twain at the Whittier dinner in the Hub, tried to treat that elder group of worthies as if they were mere human beings, and found he had made the mistake of his life. They were intellectual and artistic aristocrats and dominated the whole country. And Boston, of course, was the City of the Law. Philadelphia had had its flavors in the days of

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Franklin, and a Knickerbocker aroma lingered faintly around New York for the few who had long memories. But after 1830 or thereabouts, the centripetal and centrifugal power of the Massachusetts town was beyond question. "I'm from Boston", had a sacrosanct sound.

Then, the scene began to shift. The elder group passed from the stage and as our literature was commercialized, more and more the metropolis came to be a place where authors sold their wares, to which it was advisable to go for personal touch with editors and publishers. Suggestions of the past, to be sure, still centre in the Hub. When I was living there in 1902-5, such benign elders as Colonel Higginson, Mrs. Howe, and J. T. Trowbridge were yet on earth and lent dignity to the meetings of the Boston Authors' Club. But they were the last leaves upon the tree. Speaking several years ago to the New England Women's Club of that city, a reference made from the platform to Emerson brought a response from an old lady in the seats who spoke of him as "cousin Waldo"; and it was impressive. Of a sudden, the greater days drew near. But in dramatic contrast, let me testify it is my experience that general literary references are just as likely to stir vibrations on the part of auditors in Dakota hamlets as they are in the smaller towns of New England,—if indeed I may not add factory-ridden cities like Lawrence, Holyoke, and Lynn. It is only the honorable minority in such towns who have what might be termed literary savoir-faire.

The reputed crudity of the west (concerning which, more in a later paper) is largely in the mind's eye, Horatio. I do know of a woman, living in Minneapolis, who entered the largest bookshop of the city and inquired of the proprietor if he had a book called the New Testament, adding in perfect good faith: "It's a *new* book, isn't it?" But let me hasten to assure all who have a complacent attitude in the comparison of the two sections that this incident is not local, but merely human; it could occur anywhere, but you do not hear of it often, that is all. The plain truth is, that New England today, whatever its ancient claims, is a queer, spotty sort of neighborhood in respect of culture. Go a few miles outside the centres, and you shall find the raw, the crude, the dull, and the unenlightened flourishing like the green bay tree—and not seldom greener. The wherefore is a complex question. My impression is that the quiet country folk a generation ago, when our population was homogeneous and pedigrees provable, were much more aware of books and other denotements of cultivation than is true of them today. The lower foreign elements, a public system of education that has been forced, so it opines, well-nigh to abandon the old-time cultural ideal, cheap, flashy magazines, the motor car and the movie,—all are aspects of a modern tendency away from the time when people really sat down ruminantly in front of a book and did not care at all if it took a week to read it through. Let us confess it, even if it lay us open to the charge of being un-American, undemocratic, and anti-social. Truth is mighty and shall prevail.

Is it not highly probable that in the old Lyceum days, when Henry Ward Beecher, Wendell Phillips, and Emerson went about speaking to the tiniest country villages, the inhabitants were keener for the things of the spirit? And did not men constitute a larger element in those audiences? Now, culture lies in the lap of women's clubs

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for protection and nourishment. The stray man to be seen today in such assemblies has a sheepish, apologetic, house-broken look. The only relation of the Tired Business Man to letters is through compulsion, by way of his wife; to please her, or perforce, he listens—and sleeps. When awake, he always seems to be saying internally: "Don't blame me; it isn't my judgment, it is a judgment on *me*." Up and down the land you can meet males ten years out of college, who never for a moment reveal by any interest, conversation, or external sign of influence that they ever had an alma mater. Commerce is the thing, business has "got" them, and to know the best that has been thought and said in the world, detached from a utilitarian end, would be a silly perversion of good time. And in this Bœotian state, New England is exactly as prominent as any other section. Artist folk, college professors, clergymen, as seen by this ruling Philistine type are odd, indeterminate, semi-respectable (since mostly poor) sexless sort of creatures, neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring. Let us not disguise it: remove the New England women who coddle it from culture, and the poor, dear thing would perish; women are the conservators of literature as the monks were in the middle ages. If anybody still harbors the delusion that books of the better sort are kept a-going by the eastern states, let him consult the monthly lists of books in demand published by THE BOOKMAN, and realize the parts played by the south and different sections of the west. Honors are easy, to put it mildly.

Meanwhile, let the sweet tradition that culture is still rampant in that favored locality go right on. It is great fun to watch a mood of self-sufficiency which trades on memories and has next to nothing to back them up. To take yourself seriously becomes all the more a duty when there is so little to take. Oliver Herford is said to have defined Boston as a state of gravity surrounded by the Newtons. Observation leads me to conclude that the very best of New England is to be found in those all but innumerable suburbs of a city that for census purposes really belongs in the more-than-a-million class. It is there you find the homely old-style devotion to the humanities. Blessed be the town meeting which has kept alive these tiny burgher communities! There is a Concord air about many of them. The trolley links them with business and bustle, but their homes preserve a country tang, and a right orientation. And, goodness me, New England has her revenge anyhow. It is to be found in her all-pervasive influence, her cultural radiation throughout the United States,—a legacy from bygone days. If a first-class author come out of Chicago now, or from St. Louis, Indianapolis, Louisville, or even San Francisco (the most self-dependent town of them all, outside of New York), look into pedigree and background and the chances are good that a New England origin can be established. If New England be dethroned, her children have gone forth to conquer. Nevertheless, it is high time that the notion that she reigns supreme in matters intellectual and æsthetic be exploded with a bang so loud as to be heard even in Boston. The facts are against it. She no longer has a corner on the amenities; any more than on the *amen*—ities. And by the way, perhaps undue attention to the latter, has something to do with a shrinkage in the former?

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THE LONDONER

A Disastrous Publishing Season—Children's Books—Novels—Editions de Luxe—Collected Editions of Lord Morley and W. E. Henley—Desmond MacCarthy—"The Secret City" a Prize Novel—New Books by Two Poets—Conrad's Napoleonic Novel—His Wife's Cookery Book—His Own "Thoughts on Life and Letters"—A Life of Hugh Lane—"The Wonderful Visit"—Young Actresses and a Hint to Would-be Dramatists.

LONDON, *January* 1, 1921.

I UNDERSTAND that in America publishing has been very difficult in the year just past, and that with leaping expenses and diminished returns the year has been one to which most American publishers will look back with something of a shudder. The same may be said of the English publishing season just closed. From every hand I hear of disappointments and small sales and turnover, placed in contrast with prices for labor and production which have never been dreamed of until now. Whether it was that there was a false optimism, or whether the return from the war of so many men led to the writing and publishing of books which otherwise would have remained hidden from the public eye, I cannot say; but it appears that an enormous number of new works were projected, and these have in an almost equally enormous number proved to be commercial failures. I should say that on the whole sales for individual books were all markedly reduced, and that while there have been so many books their total sales have been extraordinarily small and unremunerative. This applies to the business of bookselling as well as that of publishing. The London trade has been poor. On the other hand, I am told that in the north, and particularly in Scotland, the bookshops have been thronged.

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Certain books have enjoyed large sales, but very few. I have already, in an earlier causerie, mentioned which these were. But whole classes of books which had been looked to with certainty as good investments in the conditions resulting from the war have been failures. I would instance particularly children's books. It was thought that as these had not been published in great numbers during the war there would be an enormous demand for them now. Not so. I should be surprised to hear of one children's book which had been a real success. What happened, I believe, was that for the first time since the outbreak of war continental toys were available. Parents and others, looking about for presents for the children, sought these toys, found them dear, but more imposing, and more "new" than books, and bought them in large numbers. The new children's books waited in the booksellers' shops, and none came to buy. A single house lost many hundreds of pounds in this way.

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Novels also were rather a drug in the market. Yet the curious thing is that they also were published in great quantities. Why, nobody knows. We

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were all told that the rise in the price of materials would eliminate the bad novels which had been published speculatively before the war. We were warned that authors who did not sell two thousand copies would in future be unable to get their novels published. I should be astounded to hear that the average sale of the majority of the novels published this last year approached that number. I should say that on most of the new novels by unknown or almost unknown writers issued in 1920, there had been a loss. For one thing, publishing prices were necessarily high, because of the fierce increases in wages in the printing and binding trades; and this made private purchases fewer than normal. For another, the number of novels as to the quality of which there has been any stir in the world, is almost exactly none at all.

* * * *

On the other hand there was a noticeable boom in editions de luxe. These were in demand. Why, unless for the reason that the new rich were donating books on a large scale to themselves and to their friends, nobody can tell me. The fact is there to speak for itself. Large prices were obtained for these editions, and the demand was in some cases greater than the supply. This strange condition of affairs is likely to continue. I hear that the new Conrad was largely over-subscribed, and it is already at a premium. And there are to be many more such editions in the near future. I observe with great interest two which are announced by Macmillan. The first of these is a collection of the works of Lord Morley. I do not feel qualified to speak of the work of Lord Morley, and I sometimes suspect that if I were to read it I should find that work a little on the dull side. Such, at any rate, is my memory of the "Life of Gladstone", which was certainly a labor of piety, and therefore overweighted with gravity. But there was all the same a noticeable sweetness of temper and taste in this monumental biography, and in all the writing of Lord Morley's that I have read this quality is perceptible. Dignity is all very well, and it cannot be missed in Lord Morley's work, because dignity and integrity are essentially among his traits. As a writer, however, I recall with relish a sentence from the book on Voltaire—a phrase which it has always been impressive to quote, or adapt, in conversation. He said, if I remember the phrase aright (I have not seen the book for twenty years): "Voltaire's writing was never the dreary still-birth of a mind of hearsays." With the negative omitted, that makes a very crushing condemnation of any writer of whom one happens to disapprove—even though he happen to be only a writer of causeries.

* * * *

The second venture to which I referred above is the complete edition of the writings of W. E. Henley. No doubt this has come about through the devotion of Charles Whibley, who, I believe, is one of Macmillans' advisers, and who was at one time a member of that group known as "Henley's Young Men". Mr. Whibley has never been celebrated as a particularly amiable critic, and his vigorous "Musings Without Method" in "Blackwood's Magazine" have been known to anger others besides the subjects of their attack. But it is not perhaps recognized that the method still used by Mr. Whibley is essentially that which Henley introduced, and into the use of which all his "young men" were so sedulously trained that one cannot es-

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cape the feeling that Henley really wrote everything in the papers he edited. Mr. Whibley's admirers probably call him "trenchant". I should myself say that he uses a bludgeon, which is a stereotyped phrase meaning that he savages anything and anybody he does not like. This is all in the best Henley tradition. The "young men" were all armed to the teeth. They were all on the war path. They all coveted scalps. They were out to tell people what a young man once described to me as "the God's Truth about themselves". It is stimulating reading, but not pleasant if one is the subject or if the subject is a friend or relation.

Henley's criticism is highly colored stuff, and it is liable to reproduce the vagaries of all temperamental critics, who must find excellences here because they are convinced that these are the only true excellences there are, and who must find faults there because such things are sins against the critic's personal canons. But in his own line, and at his best, Henley was a good and robust and healthy critic. He was sentimental in his poetry and his criticism alike, because it was a part of that whole school's impulse to be sentimental and romantic and blustering and imperialist and noisy. And noisy people are almost always sentimentalists. At the same time, there was life in his work, and it is life, after all, that gives work its importance—life and originality. So the edition of Henley is one that most booklovers will welcome. It is due, not only in time, but in justice.

* * * *

I observe in an American newspaper the advertisement of Desmond MacCarthy's "Remnants". So American readers will be enabled to read the work of a very able journalist. I must have mentioned him at the time when MacCarthy took over the literary editorship of "The New Statesman" in succession to Squire. He has long been known as a dramatic critic, and wrote a book of criticism about the famous Vedrenne-Barker management at the Court Theatre, London. His more recent accounts of Ireland, in "The Manchester Guardian", have been first-rate. He is an excellent journalist, and "Remnants" enshrines a selection from his various contributions to "The New Statesman" and other papers. MacCarthy is an exceptionally popular man in London. He is a conversationalist whose *mots* are repeated and his range of friendships is unusually wide. Unusually genuine, also. I can remember a man for whose lunch it had been suggested that I should pay, complaining bitterly: "Nobody ever thinks of doing anything for me, or paying for my lunch. People are always *eager* to do things for Desmond!" I fancy his explanation was not that MacCarthy was a more fascinating person than himself, but that MacCarthy had been to Cambridge, whereas he was an Oxford man. I will not begin a controversy as to the after-effects of going to one or other of these universities; but ingenious readers can discuss among themselves the singular clannishness of Cambridge men.

* * * *

In a letter which I received the other day the whole question of prizes for literary work was raised afresh. I learned that a prize, as to the establishment of which I had never heard a syllable, had been given to Hugh Walpole for the best novel of 1919—"The Secret City". I do not know if the award was publicly made, as is the case with the Hawthornden prize; but I rather think not. It is the Tait

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Black prize. Whether it is solely for novels, or whether, like the Hawthornden, it is for the best work of the imagination issued within a given period, I cannot say. But it is interesting that it should have been given to Walpole, because while other men might have been more in need of the money than he, it is a good thing that committees should not be afraid to award a prize to so successful a writer. Humanitarianism is such a constant element in such affairs—it would be so if I were on any committee of the kind —that the well-known writer is generally ruled out at the beginning. In some ways this is commendable, since is gives unknown men a chance, but it has its disadvantages. Principally, because it makes the gift appear a charity; secondarily, because if the prize is given to those who are more poor than meritorious the gift loses its distinguishing value, and thereby its cachet. Now that the Tait Black prize has started so well it will carry with its future gift an invaluable association.

* * * *

Talking about works of imagination, I have recently heard ecstatic accounts of two such works which are to set the world into a fever. One is a fantastic story by Walter de la Mare. The other is a huge pseudo-translation (pseudo only because it is to be a huge mine of original as well as ancient and fairy lore) by James Stephens. De la Mare is, of course, known already as the author of poems the charm of which is unique in our generation. He wrote a novel which was given the Polignac prize (now discontinued) some years ago. This was called "The Return". A story of his, "The Three Mulla-Mulgars", followed. He has long been a reviewer of poetry on "The Times Literary Supplement" and "The Westminster Gazette". A new book of his will be something of an event, and if it is as good as I am told it will be very good indeed. At least, it is bound to be interesting, for he could write nothing which had not its own distinction. James Stephens must already be well known in the United States by his charming novels which are not novels at all, but delightful fantasies and studies in the mixture of reality and unreality of life as it appears to those whose imaginations are outside the commonplace run of visualized recollections. The new book sounds as though it were a vast affair, built upon the solid rock of old faery, and embroidered and enriched by the author's romantic poetic gift. It would seem to be less a book than a literature of his own, a quarry of jewels and gold and elusive dreams and wild fantasies. I await it with a fascination quite securely engendered by the mere report of its qualities and constituents.

* * * *

Joseph Conrad is starting almost at once for Corsica in connection with the new Napoleonic novel which I spoke of some months ago. I do not know whether any of my readers tried to imagine what such a book would be, but if they ever read Mr. Conrad with the understanding which I suppose them to do, they must immediately have felt what a daring theme it was for one who has made his reputation in other realms to attempt. And yet they must have felt with equal certainty that any book which Mr. Conrad might write about the times of the man whom journalists call "the Eminent Corsican" would be unlike any other novel having a similar theme. In this my intelligent readers would be correct. Conrad's genius is too individual to allow of a conventional book. The Napoleonic literature is al-

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ready overcrowded, and he is not the one to add to the congestion. But I dare say it will sound strange to hear that this story will if possible leave Napoleon out altogether. He may force his way in. He has a devilish pertinacity. But if he can be kept wholly in the background, that will be his place in Mr. Conrad's tale. The story will deal with the time of Napoleon, and the reactions of his activities upon that time. It will be a romance, but a romance of individuals and their environment. And for the purpose of having all his own assumptions colored by actual contact with whatever scenes are described, Mr. Conrad will go even farther afield than Corsica. Corsica, nevertheless, is the object of his present journey, and the form the journey will take is that of a holiday of saturation.

* * * *

You would think from this that Mr. Conrad was fully occupied with Napoleonic matters. Not a bit of it. He has too big a mind to ignore the most important things in life. Therefore he takes a living interest in the greatest subject of all. What on earth can that be? wonders the reader. Why, FOOD! Is it so very extraordinary? I do not think so. He has written a preface, and a very remarkable and good preface, to his wife's forthcoming cookery book. Mrs. Conrad is a famous cook, and she has long desired to extend her knowledge of cooking to others. This she has done, and the book will appear here this year. It will contain the preface, but it will also contain advice so sagacious, so new, so ingenius, that the world will hereafter be under a debt of gratitude to the author for happy hours, happy homes, and happy cooks and those who benefit appreciatively from good cooking. "Go by the book", as the advertisements of a certain soap used to say. And when it appears, go *buy* the book. It will be an investment which can never fail to show a profit.

* * * *

A third work to appear—and this will be soon—with the Conrad name upon the title-page, is a collection bearing some such title as "Thoughts on Life and Letters". For those who think they know Mr. Conrad the book will be a revelation. It will show any number of new facets. It will do even more than his curious book of reminiscences did to draw aside the veil from his personality. Here, not Marlow will speak, but Conrad himself. And the informality of the book will carry us straight into the heart of things, with none of those difficult interpositions inevitable in the novels in which a tale is told by means of observant narrators who talk steadily through days and nights, without food or sleep, and requiring only, every now and then, to puff up their cigars into a red glow.

* * * *

Among new biographies is one by Lady Gregory dealing with the life of Sir Hugh Lane. This should be interesting, though I doubt whether it will present a portrait which all will recognize. Lane was a very astounding man, but he was one strangely difficult to understand. He began in a small way as an employee in the firm of a well-known art dealer. He once bought as a genuine work a painting which was regarded by experts as not genuine. So he lost his situation. He thereupon set up for himself, and the hard times he then endured were indescribable by any person who has not had hard times. But the corner was turned, and Lane's success as a connoisseur was little short of miraculous. He only bought those things which he

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felt that, given the money, he would like himself to possess. It was his sole criterion. When he needed money he sold what he prized least. Of history, and all the technical side of the expert's work, he knew nothing. Taste was all his joy. When once he was showing his collection of Chinese treasures to some who talked learnedly of dynasties, he was observed to become distrait. It appeared that the learning of the experts was wasted upon him. He knew only which of the treasures best pleased him, and of course his taste had gone straight to those things which upon every ground of connoisseurship were the best. Lane's tragic death will give additional popular interest to this biography, but the man's whole life was in this one respect a romance. What can be told of his private affairs must, I imagine, be very little, for he was not communicative, and Lady Gregory is bound to tread carefully among difficult matters.

* * * *

George Moore's play, "The Coming of Gabrielle", is either just published or imminent. That it should be what is called professionally a "good play" is out of the question. Moore's plays never have, in that respect, been good. They are not shaped and handled with the necessary curtness. But that the play is a piece of work to interest all the Moore lovers goes without saying. It is published with an Irish imprint which I suppose few readers of the play will understand, but the actual printing has been done upon this side of the Irish Channel. It is a pretty book. It is worth noting that George Moore is definitely an English classic. Nevertheless, I have just been reading with a sort of malicious amusement Frank Harris's masterly portrait of Moore in the new book of pen portraits recently published in America. It has not appeared here yet, but I cannot doubt that if the author consents a publisher will be found for it. Feeling against the anti-British note always to be read into Harris's work is not strong, as far as one can tell, and the book is certainly amusing and extraordinarily vivid.

* * * *

St. John Ervine's dramatization of H. G. Wells's "The Wonderful Visit" is to be produced next month at the St. Martin's theatre. In the cast will be found Moyna MacGill, the delightful young actress who made such a hit here in "John Ferguson". It has been singular to see the grave explanations by Wells that the play is really the work of Ervine. The truth is, apparently, that the script was read through to Wells, who made suggestions and comments. I suppose that this play will presently appear in the States, because it is in America that Ervine's principal theatrical successes have been scored. This is not at all to minimize his work for the Abbey theatre in Dublin and elsewhere. He is one of the few men who have both written plays and managed theatres, or who are capable of doing the two things, either separately or simultaneously. The production of "The Wonderful Visit" brings about the withdrawal of Mr. Galsworthy's successful "Skin Game", but we had had a warning of this coming withdrawal, because Meggie Albanesi, another very talented young actress, recently left the cast to take up the principal part in an American comedy called "The Charm School". It is sometimes lamented that there is a dearth of clever actresses, but I should imagine that it would be possible to name quite a dozen who could bear severe tests. First of all, I should place Athene Sey-

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ler, who, unless I am mistaken, will presently be recognized as the best comic actress in these islands. But there are others. Edna Best is the best ingénue I have ever seen; and if only there were more parts of the gamine variety, I imagine that we should hear more of Dorothy Minto, whose work in that genre is unsurpassed. Unfortunately there is a lack of plays of the right kind, which is in no sense to emphasize the limitations of any of these talented actresses. This is a problem which deserves attention.

* * * *

The other day I was implored by a very charming patron of the drama to produce from my own pocket or the pocket of some other dramatist a play which would give scope for the exercise of a great actor's talents. The patron had read either two hundred or two thousand plays (it does not matter which, for the result would have been the same), and in none of these had she been able to find the slightest merit. When I see a particularly able piece of acting I always swell with arrogance. I say to myself: "That man, or that girl, hasn't a chance. He, or she, deserves a play which gives him, or her, a proper field. Where is such a play?" Now comes the arrogance. I add: "I will write him, or her, a play." But such generous impulses never come to anything. I suppose that this is the case with every author. All the same, I wonder nobody is led by true appreciation of one of the people I have named, or one of those I have not named, to attack the problem seriously. I shall be told that this is not the attitude of the genuine dramatist; but I have yet to meet the genuine dramatist. Why does not somebody go in for my plan? I make a present of it to our young would-be dramatists. Instead of trying to write a play like every other play which has ever been written, why not go to life, with inspiration from a distinct personality? Ignore the familiar stars for a time. Concentrate upon the stars in the East! That way lies a possible salvation of the British stage.

SIMON PURE

LONELY

By Jo Felshin

I SHALL walk, singing sad music
Down lonely roads.
Whee-e-e-e-e-e moans the night wind
And my heart weeps with sadness.
The great black trees stand in the darkness
Apart from me,
And I drift listlessly between them
Like the night wind straining through the trees.
Whee-e-e-e-e-e.
How my heart is sad.

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A LITERARY PORTRAIT GALLERY

By Annie Nathan Meyer

OVER the distinguished collection of war portraits which has just been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and which now starts on its country-wide tour, hangs this simple statement:

EXHIBITION OF WAR PORTRAITS
BY EMINENT AMERICAN ARTISTS
FOR PRESENTATION TO
THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY AT
WASHINGTON

This will become a part of the National Gallery at Washington, begun in 1840, and since 1862 a part of the Smithsonian Institute. "Thus", says the catalogue, "initiating and establishing at Washington the National Portrait Gallery."

A dozen years ago a legacy of paintings was left to the National Gallery by a former mistress of the White House, a niece of President Buchanan, and at the time general surprise was expressed that such a gallery existed. Since then, the Freer, Evans, and Johnson gifts have rendered the collection one to be proud of; and at last we have started on the way to possess a great National Portrait Gallery where the portraits of great Americans, or those who had played an important part in our history, would be preserved.

Of course we can never hope to vie with the fascinations of the National British Portrait Gallery in London, and it is hopeless to expect our museums to give up their cherished possessions; but it is possible that replicas may in certain cases serve partly to fill the gap, while even at this late day there are valuable portraits in private possession and in studios that can be secured.

Let us glance over the field with reference solely to literary personages. A painting of Cotton Mather exists somewhere in the country by P. Pelham, and one of Jonathan Edwards at Yale is attributed to Smibert. The memorial statue of Edwards, by Herbert Adams, is at Northampton, Massachusetts. Chester Harding painted Dr. Ellery Channing (whose statue by Herbert Adams is in Boston), and Charles Loring Elliott painted Fenimore Cooper. Two delightful Washington Irvings are Jarvis's portrait at the age of twenty-seven, the hair rather wild as if the wind were blowing through it, and Vanderlyn's crayon sketch.

Of the group of New England poets, Bryant was the most fortunate. There is the Elliott portrait at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, and the great portrait of him, beardless and fairly young, by S. F. B. Morse is owned by the Academy of Design, New York. There is the bust by Herbert Adams in Bryant Park, New York, and a most interesting undramatized portrait in oils by Mathews is at the Grolier Club, New York. Then there is the lovely head by Wyatt Eaton who was sent by "The Century Magazine" to paint New England's great sextette.

Of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Eaton wrote: "His bright face and his clear grey-blue eyes shining with tenderness, were irresistible, filling me with

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delight." In a week packed with talking, while the artist painted, "Dr. Holmes never once repeated a story or a remark". Another portrait of Dr. Holmes, by J. W. Alexander, is owned by Harvard University.

There is a delightful Longfellow painted by C. G. Thompson, in 1840, a pastel by F. Alexander in 1852, a beautiful crayon done in 1854 by Samuel Laurence, an English painter who also did Lowell, a painting by Badger while Longfellow was professor at Bowdoin College, and the much reproduced portrait by Ernest Longfellow now in the possession of Bowdoin College. At the National Gallery at Washington (Evans Collection) there is the Longfellow by W. E. Marshall. Healy painted a portrait of Longfellow in 1862; he also did a delightful Hawthorne at the age of forty, and another was done by Emanuel Leutze. A very lovely portrait of Hawthorne hangs at the Grolier Club, done by the same C. G. Thompson who painted Longfellow and Bryant. This Thompson, it is said by his biographer, became very intimate with Hawthorne in Rome and was complimented in "The Marble Faun". N. P. Willis painted by Harding is owned by The Brook, a New York Club. Another portrait of Willis by a pupil of Sully hangs at the New York Historical Society where is also Palmer's bust of Irving. Ralph Goddard, a Pennsylvania sculptor, has at the Metropolitan Museum of Art medallions of Hawthorne and Longfellow.

The Public Library at Bradford, Pennsylvania, has a bust of James Russell Lowell by William Ordway Partridge, and a black and white in oils by Francis Lathrop hangs at the Grolier Club. W. Page has given us an interesting portrait of Lowell at twenty-four. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a bronze medallion of Edgar Allan Poe by Edith Woodman Burroughs. I do not know where are the busts by Partridge and by Zolnay, or the delightful Inman painted when Poe was nineteen. S. S. Osgood painted him twice. One portrait is at the Authors' Club, New York, the other at the New York Historical Society, which owns Osgood's Alice Cary. There is a full-length painting of Margaret Fuller somewhere by William Hicks, and of Ralph Waldo Emerson there is the fine unfinished portrait by William Henry Furness at the Pennsylvania Academy. A lovely drawing of Emerson was done by Rowse in 1857 and owned by Charles Eliot Norton. The only painting of Thoreau is owned in New York by George Hellman. Rowse's crayon is at the Concord Public Library, where are Elwell's bust of Louisa Alcott and French's bust of Emerson. Of this Emerson whimsically declared, "The more it resembles me, the worse it looks." But when completed the sage gave his unqualified approval thus: "That is the face I shave."

Of Whittier there exists a charming portrait painted by Otis, a pupil of Gilbert Stuart, a bust by Partridge, and at the Chicago Art Institute, Wyatt Eaton's portrait. A fine Fitz-Greene Halleck by Morse is at the Public Library, New York. Joseph De Camp's portrait of Dr. Horace H. Furness is at the Pennsylvania Academy. The Century Club owns an important canvas, R. H. Stoddard painted by that distinguished artist J. Alden Weir. It also owns a Parke Godwin by Frank Fowler not so happy as the one temporarily to be seen there by J. W. Alexander. Alexander also made a drawing of the historian Bancroft. Prescott was painted by Ames and also in England in 1850 by George Richmond.

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Probably the best portrait painted by Frank Fowler is his William Dean Howells at the Grolier Club. Howells has also been painted by Orlando Rouland, and a charming medallion exists of him and his daughter at the hand of Saint Gaudens. Henry James has been fortunate in being sketched by Sargent, by Cecilia Beaux, and by his nephew William James, a delightful picture in the collection at Fenway Court, Boston. Julia Ward Howe has been painted by her son-in-law John Elliott. A bust by Clevenger is at the Boston Public Library, and a relief by Dallin at the Boston Museum. Keyser's bust of Lanier is at Johns Hopkins University.

Walt Whitman is the subject of two great paintings by two great painters: the one by Thomas Eakins now owned by the Pennsylvania Academy, red-cheeked, virile, "life immense, in passion, pulse and power"; the other by J. W. Alexander owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, "ineffable grace of dying days". Partridge has modeled a bust of Whitman. His Dr. S. Weir Mitchell is at the College of Physicians in Philadelphia, where is also a great portrait of our second doctor-author by R. W. Vonnoh. It is a replica of an earlier one owned by the Pennsylvania Academy, which also owns Vonnoh's Charles Francis Adams. Dr. Mitchell is in a blue coat, a scarlet cravat, and pearl-grey trousers against a grey background. The thoughtful, distinguished face, and the long, sensitive hands are beautifully done.

Mark Twain has been portrayed many times and in many forms. Favorites of mine are the characteristic portrait—corncob pipe in mouth—by Carroll Beckwith, owned by Twain's daughter, Mrs. Gabrilowitch, and a delightful drawing by Abbott Thayer owned by the Chicago Institute of Art, which also has his drawing of George Cable. A most successful portrait bust of John Bigelow was done by Edith Woodman Burroughs, and a portrait in oils by Rouland.

The John Herron Institute of Art at Indianapolis owns a characteristic Sargent—the portrait of James Whitcomb Riley. A full-length portrait of another Hoosier author, Edward Eggleston, is still in the studio of Irving Wiles where it should not be suffered to remain long. Here is an important portrait by an important artist which should at once be secured for the new Portrait Gallery. Another portrait which is available is the William Winter painted by Rouland, the critic being seated in one of his treasures, the armchair of Horace Greeley. There is another Winter somewhere by Frank D. Millet. Daniel Huntington painted George William Curtis and Edward Everett Hale's bust by Partridge is at the Union League Club, Chicago. One of the fine portraits that may be free some day to go to the National Portrait Gallery is the Richard Watson Gilder by Cecilia Beaux, who has also made drawings of Thomas Janvier (owned by the Century Club), Henry James, and S. Weir Mitchell. Anything, however slight, from the hand of Miss Beaux is to be cherished. Another drawing, by the way, of the picturesque head of Thomas Janvier was done by Carroll Beckwith, who also painted Percival Lowell, John Kendrick Bangs, and an unfinished Oliver Herford.

The Detroit Art Gallery owns a splendid, full-length portrait of "Ik Marvel" by Gari Melchers, known as "The Fencing Master". Although Henry George is not strictly a literary man, I must include his portrait at the Metropolitan Museum because it was painted by that most distinguished

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painter who has not given us near enough portraits, George de Forest Brush. Of our playwrights (with the exception of a charming pen and ink sketch of Bronson Howard at the Authors' Club) I know only the portrait of Clyde Fitch by Chase, at Amherst, and a bust of Augustus Thomas by Robert Aitken. Of living men and women, there are portraits of Edwin Arlington Robinson by Lilla Cabot Perry, of Robert Underwood Johnson by Chase—one of his very best—, an arresting, vigorous sketch of Booth Tarkington done in oils at a single sitting by J. W. Alexander (owned by the Quadrangle Club at Princeton), a Henry van Dyke by the same artist, a bronze bust of George Woodberry by Partridge, now at the Cheshire Academy, Connecticut, as well as a bust by the same sculptor by Edwin Markham, who has also been done by Rouland, but, it seems to me, never so satisfactorily as his splendid head would warrant. Hamlin Garland is another distinguished looking man who has never had quite his due in paint, although he has been done by Louis Betts and by Rouland. The Betts portrait is owned by the Academy of Arts and Letters. Betts has also painted an Emerson Hough now in Chicago, the property of the author. The indefatigable Orlando Rouland has painted John Burroughs seventeen times. One portrait done in his doctor's robes hangs at Yale University; one, done at the request of Theodore Roosevelt, was owned by him. Would that more like Rouland found poets and philosophers as paintable as bankers! There also exist by him a portrait of Irving Bacheller and one of James Lane Allen, owned by the Public Library at Lexington, Kentucky. There is a crayon portrait of Kate Douglas Wiggin, by Charles Akers, a medallion by Saint Gaudens of Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, and a delightful Edith Wharton by Julian Story. I include Dr. Richard Cabot who has written on social questions, because of his portrait by that fine, sincere artist John Johansen. A bust exists of our dean of critics, William C. Brownell, by Olin Warner. Lorado Taft in his "History of American Sculpture" says of it: "It is among the choicest of our native productions in this field." Leo Mielziner has done a portrait in oils of W. P. Trent, and drawn Ellis Parker Butler, Arthur Guiterman, Frank Jewett Mather in red chalk.

Within the bounds of the exceedingly limited time given me to write this article, it has been absolutely impossible to attempt an exhaustive account. But it is hoped that my efforts will inspire others to complete the list. An interesting plan has been formulated by the National Art Committee whereby the cities of the nation may have a share in creating the National Portrait Gallery. The portraits may be financed by an art patron of a city and presented in the name of that city, a representative of that city at the same time becoming an honorary member of the National Art Committee. I suggest that not alone cities, but smaller communities from one end of the United States to the other, should set about without delay to contribute portraits of those citizens of whom they are most proud. It is well, too, not to wait too long, for some of the most delightful portraits of the past are those of the young who then stood on the threshold of fame.

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THIRTY THOUSAND POETS FROM JAPAN

By Shigeyoshi Obata

ONE of the many ceremonials that fill the Mikado's court calendar for the month of January is the first meeting of the year for poetry recitation, known as the *Uta Go-kwai Hajime*. The word *uta* is another name for the *tanka*—the native and orthodox diminutive poem of thirty-one syllables in five divisions. The second phrase means "august meeting", and the third, "commencement".

This time-honored institution, established in 1484, was for several centuries exclusively a court function. A theme was assigned by the emperor himself, and it was only members of the imperial family and highborn personages of the palace, who gathered to recite their New Year's poems. Early in the reign of the late Emperor Meiji, however, certain officials of high rank were invited to attend; then the people at large began to participate by sending in poems for their sovereign's perusal. In 1879 the institution was further popularized by having several poems, selected from the work of the people, read together with those of the imperial courtiers.

It is a quaint and impressive ceremony. At ten o'clock in the morning the officials of the Poetry Bureau of the Court arrive to see that all is in readiness in the Hall of the Phœnix Birds. Robed in sumptuous brocades the imperial prince and the princesses enter, followed by the ministers and all other men of preeminence who are privileged to attend. Then a steward requests the presence of their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress, who presently appear in the hall, accompanied by the Minister of the Palace, the Lord Chamberlain, and various attendants. All rise and make deep obeisance. After their Majesties are seated the Staff of Court Poets advance, taking a place of honor for the performance of their special duties of the day. The Master-reader places the poems in a tray before his Majesty, and announces, "The poems composed by the imperial command at the beginning of the year on the theme of" so and so. Then he gives the first reading, slowly speaking the poem, and the name and rank of its author. Again, the Master-prompter reads the first division of the poem, and the chorus of clear-voiced Master-reciters join him, finishing the last four divisions in unison. Thus each poem is read and recited, beginning with that of the author whose station in life is lowliest. When they reach the verses of members of the imperial household, the recitation is repeated twice. When these are finished, the Master-poet makes a move to leave his post, as if his task were ended.

"Shibaraku" (a moment, Master)! The Master-reader halts him, for there are still the poems of the Emperor and Empress to be recited. Has the Master-poet forgotten? No; this is simply an elaborate piece of etiquette, signifying the reverential hesitancy on his part to allow the poems of his sovereigns to be read in a continuous sequence with those of the subjects. The ceremony proceeds.

The Master-reader receives the

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poem of the Empress. It is recited three times.

Finally he approaches his Majesty, the Emperor, with great trepidation. He takes the imperial poem haltingly. Then it is rehearsed by the Master-poet, prompted, and recited as before, five times, while the whole assembly including the Empress rises to listen reverently. The ceremony is over.

At noon there is a palace banquet, where gifts are presented to those poets who took part in the recitation. That evening in Tokio, and the next morning all over the empire, newspapers print the poems, including those selected from the people, stories about the happy winners of the honor, interviews by ubiquitous reporters.

Although no prizes are involved in this affair, it long ago developed into a poetry contest of national scope, in which thousands compete for the honor of having their poems recited before that exalted audience, as well as for the unutterable satisfaction of seeing their poems printed in all the newspapers and statistical almanacs of Japan. The number of participants increases astonishingly. In the 'eighties it was several thousand. It passed the fifteen thousand mark early in the first decade of the present century, and in recent years it has been rapidly approaching the thirty thousand goal.

Ordinarily, the poems are descriptive—sketches of the same objects and scene viewed from a thousand different angles. Sometimes the author pays compliments to the Emperor, by referring to the peace and prosperity of his reign. Here is a typical group —I choose a few—from the commencement poems of 1920 on the theme: "The Early Plum Flower of Country-Side".

Though in winter,
With your hedge grass
Growing green,
Your plum trees are in flower,
O house of a little garden!

The Emperor

Ah, a house I see,
Where ere the time
The plum trees are in flower
Yonder across
The small unplowed field.

The Empress

Without awaiting the spring,
You begin to bloom
Afield—by the hedge
Of a lowly cottage,
O first plum flower of the year!

An imperial princess

Let me come
And winter here
Among your plum tree rows
Abloom ere the springtime,
O hamlet of the hills.

An imperial princess

With the year's harvest
Of abundance
With the fragrance of plum flower
Before the winter has passed,
O blest hamlet of the hills!

The Minister of the Palace

You mimic the hue
Of the hoar frost,
But hide not your fragrance,
O plum trees by the door
Of a cottage on the hill!

The Master-poet

Even in winter
Bloom the plum trees
Under your Majesty's reign
While over villages of wide acres
The smoke rises in abundance.

The Steward

Even in America the Japanese preserve their beautiful custom. The New Year's Day issues of the vernacular papers published in California contain many a column of *tanka* and other kinds of verse. The poetic propensity of the race has survived the toils and trials in a strange land. In fact, it seems contagious. For a dispatch from Tokio states that an American woman, Mrs. Charles Burnett, wife of a United States legation attaché, who has learned to write in Japanese, has won the coveted honor at this year's recitation. The theme was: "The Dawn at the Shinto Shrine".

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A SHELF OF RECENT BOOKS

WALT WHITMAN—DRAMATIC CRITIC

By Alexander Woollcott

PROBABLY most of us never knew or, having known, forgot that Walt Whitman was once cabined and confined as the entirely respectable editor of the Brooklyn "Eagle", although it is easy to believe that the successive generations of bright young men who have since tarried a while in the office of that journal have liked to keep the fact in mind as some sort of assurance that they, too, might be serving a mere apprenticeship in letters and would doubtless go forth, each and every one to write a "Leaves of Grass" wherewith to jounce the universe. It had, you see, been done.

Two of his successors, Cleveland Rodgers and John Black (the latter a young poet and the former one of the ablest, soundest, and most persuasive of present-day American newspaper men) have been making the dust fly where once the fur flew, have, that is, been busily digging into the files of the "Eagle" from March 1846 to January 1848, the span of nearly two years during which Whitman held and enjoyed what he later described as "one of the pleasantest sits" of his life. The resultant mass of political broadsides, essays, and criticisms either literary, domestic, or musical they have now collected in two volumes which derive their title from the good grey poet's own phrase about "the big strong days—our young days—days of preparation: the gathering of the forces". It is difficult to stifle a regret that they did not less pretentiously entitle their findings: "The Forgotten Works of Walter Whitman."

Among their many hypothetical explanations of why all this available material had been neglected by Whitman's publishers and biographers, they do not suggest either of two that must occur immediately to any reader of their collection—that the stuff was hardly worth the labor involved in its exhumation or, more positively, that its republication would be a distinct disservice to the reputation of a great name. Such republications are almost invariably of this effect, as you may verify by reading the dreary stuff by Kipling and Barrie which, to their own intense annoyance, a later fame dragged forth from decent interment in old newspaper files.

Yet if "The Gathering of the Forces" adds not a cubit to Whitman's stature, it does provide mildly interesting new material for his future biographers; and while you may be quite unconscious of any hope that there will be another Whitman biography, you must at least expect one. And, indeed, after the amazing tour de force achieved by Mr. Strachey in his "Eminent Victorians" and meditated by him in his threatened life of the Prince Consort, there can be no saying when and of whom a brilliant biography will not dislodge all others from the shelf.

Of course these assembled press clippings not only light up for a time the face of one whom a surviving printer's devil still recalls as "a nice, kind man", but constitute an even

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more valuable sourcebook for such alluring adventures in reconstruction as "The Age of Innocence", say, or "Richard Carvel". Indeed, they provide in convenient and comparatively portable form a little of that endless pleasure many of us find in access to the yellowing files of magazines and newspapers. It takes a genius to create anything more entertaining than a volume of the New York "Evening Post", of any day save our own. To mull idly over the editorials and news items and advertisements of the New York that exhausted Dickens, of the New York that embittered Rachel, and of the New York that elected Lincoln, is to indulge in a diverting and ever-illuminating pastime. Something of that entertainment is provided in "The Gathering of the Forces" and makes handsome amends for the discovery that, in the midst of writing much that was wholesome and brave and characteristic and prophetic, Walter Whitman was the kind of journalist who gave way at times to such internecine strife as Eatanswill knew, that he bore an occasional disturbing resemblance to the Jefferson Brick who welcomed Martin Chuzzlewit, and that he was the kind of paragrapher who would burst forth without warning in this wise: "Carelessly knocking a man's eye out with a broken axe may be termed a bad axe-i-dent."

Such archæological research always rewards you with a dual sense of mankind as both changeless and changing, so that in the midst of paragraphs musty with their illusion of a bygone day you come stumbling on evidences that Whitman wrote but yesterday; such evidences, for instance, as his pronunciamento that Mexico must be chastised, his suggestion that servants are not hard to keep if you but treat them with dignity, his discovery that the drama is in a state of decline, and his disposition to blame its decay on "the star system".

For Whitman was a dramatic critic, taking up such work at about the time Poe dropped it, and though it is tempting to let you savor his anti-slavery propaganda and his emotions on a trip to Coney Island in the stagecoach days, you will get an even better sense of him if you sample his reviews and find even happier indices of how times have changed—and of how they haven't. For instance, if you would change the fraction from "five-sixths" to "one-third", the following indictment would be no great exaggeration of dramatic criticism as it is written in New York today:

> Of the method in which five-sixths of the Theatrical Criticism of the New York press comes into existence, may be mentioned the long cut and dried puff in yesterday's New York "Herald", of the Keans' acting in a play *which accidentally didn't come off!* This is not the first, nor the second nor the third awkward blunder of the kind which has occurred of late. . . . Most of the "criticisms" in the metropolitan press are written *before the plays are played*—and paid for by the theatre, or other parties. Of those which are not so paid for, the majority are the fruits of solicitation, favoritism, and so on. In the midst of all that stale and unwholesome utterance, the speaking of a single paragraph of unbiased truth falls like an alarming and terrible thing! It would be a curious result—and a profitable one—to take a while to the theatre some man, highly educated and knowing the world in other things—but totally *fresh* to the stage—and let him give his real opinions of the queer sort of doings he would see there.

And this, written as it was a year after the production of Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion" at the Park, is significant and interesting:

> The drama of this country CAN be the mouthpiece of freedom, refinement, liberal philanthropy, beautiful love for all our brethren, polished manners and elevated good taste. It could wield potent sway to destroy any attempt at despotism—it can attack and hold up to scorn bigotry, fashionable affectation, avarice and all unmanly follies. Youth may be warned by its fictitious portraits of the evil of unbridled passions. . . . In order to reap such

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by no means difficult results, the whole method of theatricals as at present pursued in New York needs first to be overthrown.... New York City is the only spot in America where such a revolution could be attempted, too. With all our servility to foreign fashions, there is at the heart of the intelligent masses there a lurking propensity toward what is original, and has a stamped American character of its own. In New York, also, are gathered a number of men, literary persons and others, who have a strong desire to favor anything which shall extricate us from the entangled and by no means creditable position we already hold of playing second fiddle to Europe. These persons—most of them young men, enthusiastic, democratic and liberal in their feelings, are daily acquiring a greater and greater power. And after all, anything appealing to the honest heart of the people, as to the peculiar and favored children of freedom, as to a new race and with a character separate from the kingdoms of other countries, would meet with a ready response and strike at once the sympathies of all the true men who love America, their native or chosen land.

The above sentiments guided somewhat this critic of the 'forties in his passionate devotion to our own Charlotte Cushman, whom he usually referred to simply as C. C. and whom he defiantly described as the greatest performer in any hemisphere. They doubtless discolored, too, his vision of the Keans and particularly of Mrs. Kean (she who had been Ellen Tree), when these gracious visitors to the new world were too much lauded by Whitman's fellow first-nighters. Listen to his fierce review of Mrs. Kean:

Of the lady, truth will not allow much more favorable mention. She *was* a young woman of genius—she is *merely* the frame and thews of that time, with none of its pliant grace, its smoothness, its voluptuous swell—(merely ex-Tree, and *not* extra). Gallantry and common politeness require the avoidance of criticising her merits as plainly as her husband's. Manliness and ordinary decency, however, demand even more imperatively the avoidance of that fulsome sawdering of praise which a portion of the papers voluntarily demean themselves to publish.

From all we know of the theatre Whitman denounced, it must really have been pretty bad, particularly in the dire poverty of its literature. But his vehement announcements of its decline fall on ears a little deafened from the same song sung in England at a time when Fielding was managing one theatre, Sheridan writing for another, and Kemble, Garrick, and Mrs. Siddons lending dignity to the entertainments of the hour. In the 'eighties, they were looking back wistfully to the very era that so dissatisfied Whitman, and now those same regrettable 'eighties are being held up to us in shining contrast to the melancholy condition of our own stage. During the early days of the war, by adding together the French advances as daily reported in the Bennett newspapers, it used to be facetiously calculated that the Germans were making one last desperate stand near Vladivostok, and a temperature chart of the decline of the stage as reported in each generation since Shakespeare would reveal it as now out of sound or hearing in the depths of the bottomless pit.

The Gathering of the Forces. By Walt Whitman. Edited by Cleveland Rodgers and John Black. Two volumes. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

OLD LOVE AND NEW POETRY OR VICE VERSA

By Floyd Dell

THERE is a very challenging prefatory note to this new book of poems by Mr. Untermeyer. It is called "A Note on the Poetry of Love", and its thesis is that the poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not know how to write about love. They wrote about it a great deal, to be sure; they wrote about hardly anything else. But they were "clumsy" and "ignorant" in their treatment of love. To make his indictment as inclusive as possible, Mr. Untermeyer specifically

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names three poets who represent almost the whole range of the love poetry of these two centuries—Pope, Tennyson, and Swinburne. And he says: "None of these poets knew, or to be more accurate, knew now to express, what love between the sexes really meant."

Not very many years ago, an attack of this kind upon the major deities of English poetry would have been punished by those whose function it is to guard the sacred precincts of literature from impious marauders. Mr. Untermeyer would have been excommunicated from all God-fearing literary circles.... But the times, it seems, have changed. There is no one left, except Harry Kemp, to do reverence to the memory of Pope. A young poet can say what he likes about Tennyson with impunity. And even Swinburne—Swinburne of the perpetual raptures and roses—is relegated into the company of Edward Bok, late of "The Ladies' Home Journal", as one who knew nothing about women.

Far be it from me to rise in their defense. It was so sober a critic as Matthew Arnold, I believe, who said that the trouble with the poets of his century was that they did not know enough. And since it was love that they almost exclusively wrote about, he may very well have been anticipating Mr. Untermeyer's opinion that they did not know enough about women. I think, myself, that is profoundly true; but I would not have ventured to say so in print if Mr. Untermeyer had not already done so and proved that one could do it and yet live.

But I have, even if Mr. Untermeyer has not, a sentiment of reverence. And I would not subscribe to these disrespectful opinions about the Great Ones, without the excuse of a violent personal emotion on the subject. If Shelley had sold you some bad mining stock, you would feel at liberty to criticize his economic views. Well, that is the way I feel about the poets. They have deceived and misled me, betrayed my youthful confidence and trust—in short, cheated me. They pretended to know something about love, and now I know that all their expert lore was bogus, and I am angry at them. Moreover, I suspect that the whole of the younger generation must feel somewhat the same way about them—or Mr. Untermeyer's preface would not have been received with such calmness.

But, above all, I suspect that this same personal grudge, rather than any coldly critical process, is the origin of Mr. Untermeyer's own present views.

My suspicion is confirmed by a glance at Mr. Untermeyer's earliest book of poems, now ten years old—"First Love", it is called. As a book of poems it is pretty bad, but I have no intention of bringing up his youthful technical blunders against him now. It is as a record of sentimental attitudes that the volume interests me. I quote only one stanza, with apologies to everybody concerned—it hurts me just as much as it does them:

> My soul is sick of roses,
> Of lilies proud and pale—
> In scented garden closes
> The old-time beauties fail.
> And though the spell reposes
> On every flower that grows,
> My soul is sick of roses
> Since she has scorned the rose.

It may seem unjust to blame Pope and Tennyson and Swinburne for a stanza like that, but what else can you blame? Not New York City, in which Mr. Untermeyer was born and reared, nor the subway, nor the Hearst papers, nor any other unfortunate en-

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vironmental influences to which this young poet was subjected—certainly not the young woman, whoever she was, who inspired this lyric outburst.

I do not mean to suggest that Mr. Untermeyer was peculiarly susceptible to such influences, nor alone in reproducing them. We were all doing it. How else could a young man learn about love, except by reading the poets? How else, indeed, except by opening his eyes and looking at the girl he was interested in and seeing what she was like, and saying what he felt about the real "she"—who was, one may safely surmise, utterly unlike the Chloes and Mauds and Faustines of English poesy!

Well, Mr. Untermeyer has been opening his eyes of late, and has been saying what he thinks of the female of the species. Sometimes it is an angry protest against her spiritual demands; sometimes a tribute of child-like gratitude to her bodily sweetness; sometimes a piece of ironic mockery at their failure to make two selfish wishes meet in one perfection; or again it is such a momentary amused wonder as this:

> Before the prim, old mirror
> That stands so stiffly there,
> With puritan precision
> You rearrange your hair....
>
> My pretty, proper darling,
> With not one hair amiss,
> Who turns, like some calm duty,
> One powdered cheek to kiss,
>
> Are you the same wild creature
> I held last night, and found
> Sleeping upon my shoulder
> With all her hair unbound?

But always it is a real emotion that is dealt with—always a reflection of an experience that can recognizably be found, if not in the pages of Palgrave's "Golden Treasury", at least in the life of any mortal lover.... And it is so much more interesting! No wonder Mr. Untermeyer is angry at Pope and Tennyson and Swinburne, who for a time by their strange and ethereal and traditional notions succeeded in blurring for him the outlines of this ever-interesting reality!

The New Adam. By Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace and Co.

THE BALTIMORE ANTI-CHRIST

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

THE incomparable Mencken will, I fear, meet the fate of Aristides. He will be exiled because one is tired of hearing his praises sung. In at least three contemporary novels he is mentioned as though he were dead as Voltaire and as secure as Shaw with what he would term "a polite bow". His style is imitated by four-fifths of the younger critics—moreover he has demolished his enemies and set up his own gods in the literary supplements.

Of the essays in the new book the best is the autopsy on the still damp bones of Roosevelt. In the hands of Mencken Roosevelt becomes almost a figure of Greek tragedy; more, he becomes alive and loses some of that stuffiness that of late has become attached to all 100% Americans. Not only is the essay most illuminating but its style is a return to Mencken's best manner, the style of "Prefaces", with the soft pedal on his amazing chord of adjectives and a tendency to invent new similes instead of refurbishing his amusing but somewhat overworked old ones.

Except for the section on American aristocracy there is little new in the first essay "The National Letters": an abundance of wit and a dozen ideas that within the past year and under his own deft hand have become bro-

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mides. The Knights of Pythias, Right Thinkers, On Building Universities, Methodists, as well as the corps of journeyman critics and popular novelists come in for their usual bumping, this varied with unexpected tolerance toward "The Saturday Evening Post" and even a half grudging mention of Booth Tarkington. Better than any of this comment, valid and vastly entertaining as it is, would be a second Book of Prefaces say on Edith Wharton, Cabell, Woodrow Wilson—and Mencken himself. But the section of the essay devoted to the Cultural Background rises to brilliant analysis. Here again he is thinking slowly, he is on comparatively fresh ground, he brings the force of his clarity and invention to bear on the subject—passes beyond his function as a critic of the arts and becomes a reversed Cato of a civilization.

In "The Sahara of Bozart" the dam breaks, devastating Georgia, Carolina, Mississippi, and Company. The first trickle of this overflow appeared in the preface to "The American Credo"; here it reaches such a state of invective that one pictures all the region south of Mason-Dixon to be peopled by moron Catilines. The ending is gentle—too gentle, the gentleness of ennui.

To continue in the grand manner of a catalogue: "The Divine Afflatus" deals with the question of inspiration and the lack of it, an old and sad problem to the man who has done creative work. "Examination of a Popular Virtue" runs to eight pages of whimsical excellence—a consideration of ingratitude decided at length with absurd but mellow justice. "Exeunt Omnes", which concerns the menace of death, I choose to compare with a previous "Discussion" of the same subject in "A Book of Burlesques". The comparison is only in that the former piece, which I am told Mencken fatuously considers one of his best, is a hacked out, glued together bit of foolery, as good, say, as an early essay of Mark Twain's, while this "Exeunt Omnes", which follows it by several years, is smooth, brilliant, apparently jointless. To my best recollection it is the most microscopical examination of this particular mote on the sun that I have ever come across.

Follows a four paragraph exposition of the platitude that much music loving is an affectation and further paragraphs depreciating opera as a form. As to the "Music of Tomorrow" the present reviewer's ignorance must keep him silent, but in "Tempo di Valse" Mencken, the modern, becomes Victorian by insisting that what people are tired of is more exciting than what they have just learned to do. If his idea of modern dancing is derived from watching men who learned it circa thirty-five, toiling interminably around the jostled four square feet of a cabaret, he is justified; but I see no reason why the "Bouncing Shimmee" efficiently performed is not as amusing and as graceful and certainly as difficult as any waltz ever attempted. The section continues with the condemnation of a musician named Hadley, an ingenious attempt to preserve a portrait of Dreiser, and a satisfactory devastation of the acting profession.

In "The Cult of Hope" he defends his and "Dr. Nathan's" attitude toward constructive criticism—most entertainingly—but the next section "The Dry Millennium", patchworked from the Ripetizione Generale, consists of general repetitions of theses in his previous books. "An Appendix on a Tender Theme" contains his more recent speculations on women, eked out with passages from "The Smart Set".

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An excellent book! Like Max Beerbohm, Mencken's work is inevitably distinguished. But now and then one wonders—granted that, solidly, book by book, he has built up a literary reputation most to be envied of any American, granted also that he has done more for the national letters than any man alive, one is yet inclined to regret a success so complete. What will he do now? The very writers to the press about the blue Sabbath hurl the bricks of the buildings he has demolished into the still smoking ruins. He is, say, forty; how of the next twenty years? Will he find new gods to dethrone, some eternal "yokelry" still callous enough to pose as intelligenzia before the Menckenian pen fingers? Or will he strut among the ruins, a man beaten by his own success, as futile, in the end, as one of those Conrad characters that so tremendously enthrall him?

Prejudices. Second Series. By H. L. Mencken. Alfred A. Knopf.

WHAT IS THE "AMERICAN LANGUAGE"?

By Ring W. Lardner

THIS is my first and last chance to review a book and I wish I could give it a good pasting. There's even less fun in writing eulogies than in reading them, while infinite enjoyment can be found in hopping on a literary cripple, knocking it for a corpse, and strewing the grave with an elegant shower bouquet of raspberries. Anticipation of that was what persuaded me to take this job. But they crossed me. The book ain't a cripple.

And not having met Mr. Weaver, I can't even paste him personally. He may belong to the Lord's Day Alliance or wear two-piece woolen underclothes or tell unclean stories in unclean Pullman washrooms. But I don't know and I'm afraid not.

So I'll have to make the best of a rotten assignment.

The faintest praise with which I can d——n the book is to say that it's a d——n good b——k of mostly —— verse, readable and buyable because the poems have story interest and are written in the language we, this means you, speak. Pure American, nearly. The few impurities are a lifesaver for the critic. We can't hope to land the old K. O. on the writer's jaw, but we can fret him a little with a few pokes to the ear.

For the most part this organ has served Mr. Weaver well. But I think that on occasion it consciously or unconsciously plays him false. It has told him, for example, that we say *everythin'* and *anythin'*. We don't. We say *somethin'* and *nothin'*, but we say *anything* and *everything*. There appears to be somethin' about the *y* near the middle of both these words that impels us to acknowledge the *g* on the end of them. Mr. Weaver's ear has also give or gave (not gi'n) him a bum hunch on *thing* itself. It has told him to make it *thin'*. But it's a real effort to drop the *g* off this little word and, as a rule, our language is not looking for trouble. His ear has gone wrong on the American for *fellow*, *kind of*, and *sort of*. Only on the stage or in "comic strips" do we use *feller*, *kinder*, and *sorter*. *Kinda* and *sorta* are what us common fellas say.

And how about the lines, "Now that I'm sure he never won't come back" and "You don't know how to dream and never won't"? *Never will* and *won't never* are American. *Never won't* ain't. Other lines I challenge

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are, "I crope up on him" and "You should of hearn the row there was". I don't say *crope* and *hearn* are impossible. I do say *crep'* and *heard* are a great deal more common.

The line, "Look what I done for you and him and me", is good American, but better American, I believe, would be, "Look what I done for him and you and I". This, however, brings up a subject to which one ought to be able to devote a whole volume, but one ain't goin' to. One is only goin' to state that mysterious rules govern the cases of personal pronouns in our language and one hasn't had time to solve the mysteries even since prohibition. We say, "He come up to me in the club", but we also say, "He come up to Charley and I in the club" or even "He come up to I and Charley in the club." Charley's presence in the club seems, for "some reason another", to alter my case. The other night I was reading a play script by one of this country's foremost dramatists; and recurring in it was the stage direction, "A look passes between he and So-and-So." But this playwright wouldn't think of saying or writing, "She passed he a look."

My theory on this particular point is that when the common American citizen, whom we will call Joe, was in his last year in school (the sixth grade), the teacher asked him how many boys there were in his family. He replied: "Just Frank and me." "Just Frank and I," corrected the teacher. And the correction got Joe all balled up.

But you don't want my theories and I can't find any more fault with Mr. Weaver's ear. Nor any with his book except to say that no book can be really "in American" that denies admission to the favorite American adjective—*lousy*. Doubtless delicacy, not defective hearing, kept this out. But it's unquestionably our busiest adjective today; it describes so adequately such a great variety of things. Including this review.

In American. By J. V. A. Weaver. Alfred A. Knopf.

WOMAN SEES STEEL

By Mary Austin

MANY people have been looking forward to this book of Mary Heaton Vorse's for more reasons than a desire for information on the steel situation. It is the first book of importance dealing with the subjects women will have to face in their new capacity of citizenship, with a voice in its final determination. In what spirit and manner will women communicate with one another on these things?

Mrs. Vorse is one of the investigators employed by the Interchurch movement to report on the steel situation, one of the most acute industrial problems in the United States. Her experience and dependability in making such researches are sufficiently attested, and her opportunities to learn were exceptional.

Everyone is familiar through the daily news with the issue of that investigation, and the part it played in the check, and presumably permanent overthrow, of the Interchurch World Movement. Naturally the question arises, what is there in the way a woman saw the situation that throws any light on the inter-relations of the church and the economic and industrial world of men?

From the first page of "Men and Steel", which is agreeably published in a style that brings its price within all

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reach, one discovers a characteristic feminine directness in the approach. Mrs. Vorse went to see steel, and that is what she saw, the whole gigantic process accepted as a fact, the way women accept things. Steel! After a little the confused, overpowering impression resolved into elements: smoke, fire, slack, steel towns, houses of steel workers, and finally men. Always she sees the men in little, dwarfed by the thing they serve. Always she seems them humanly. Nowhere is there any attempt to corner our sympathy for the steel workers as such, no abuse of steel owners, no discoverable bias; nothing in fact, but the steady, delicate stroke on stroke of a woman's seeing. She sees the sordid tenements of the river bottoms at Braddock, "two story brick houses... the courts bricked and littered with piles of cans, piles of rubbish, bins of garbage, hillocks of refuse...pale children paddled in the squashy filth and made playthings of ancient rubbish." A little later she says, "What condemns them to live there is their children; the more children the less chance of escape." Of two men she met, Milko and Pasterik, Pasterik has escaped to live in a house of his own with an outlook. Milko explains, "Four of his children die by diphtheria. My children they all live." So for Milko there is no escape. On such observed and unremarked-upon incidents Mrs. Vorse rests her case.

It is the bright singularity of Mrs. Vorse's method that she nowhere attempts to do the reader's thinking for him. Neither does she make any attempt to overweight the situation in favor of the workers, by playing on the reader's emotions. Here her magnanimity toward her audience is supreme, for Mrs. Vorse is a literary artist ranking high in our native galaxy. Readers of her fiction know what she can do in the way of plucking at the strings of pity and rage and gayety; but the style of "Men and Steel" is almost stark. The sentences are short, the descriptive matter reduced to a minimum, the writer's own reactions have about that relation to the narrative that the polished surface of a mirror has to the reflection in it. You may remark in passing that it is a fine mirror, but it is the reflection, after all, that claims you. There is no blurring of the lines. If she shows you the workers suffering unjustifiably under the situation, she shows them in the same stroke as rather ignorant and helpless. If she shows the owners, the burgess and the paid constabulary, as prejudiced and brutal, she also shows them as resting under our general human limitation. She shows them, and this is where the book bites at last, as *us*.

That I think, is Mrs. Vorse's final judgment on the steel situation. Both the steel strike and the manner in which it was finally worn down and stamped out, the reason why it was never intelligently adjudicated, why the germs of another greater and still more wasteful strike were simply swept into dark corners there to fester and breed, are to be found in the lack on the part of the American public of any wholesome and rectifying attitude toward it. We are either not so intelligent a public as we have liked to think ourselves, or we are much more selfish and intellectually indolent. There can never be any "good, sensible settlement" of the steel workers' troubles, because up to date there is a total lack of "good, sensible" suggestions. As a last touch, Mrs. Vorse effectually disposes of our lazy and self-exculpating way of dismissing the subject saying, "Well, if they don't like it here,

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why don't they go back where they came from?", by showing that thousands of them ardently long to go back out of this unimagined confusion and disappointment of American industrialism, but that the conditions of the steel industry do not permit them to save the price of the passage.

I can offer no better evidence of the quality of Mrs. Vorse's book than the effect it has so unmistakably produced on the reviewer. Perhaps an important item of that effect is the manner in which the book has been put together. For the first time we have a serious and dependable book on industrialism, which is not cast in the pattern laid down in the eighteenth century. There is in "Men and Steel" not a trace of the influence of the cloister or the university which has so far determined the general mode of presentation of serious subjects. The long, argumentative chapter, the solid grey page, the academic insistence on a sequence of presentation which has nothing to do with the way in which facts are gleaned from life and experience—all these are banished from Mrs. Vorse's book. It proceeds by paragraphs, each with its own caption, suitably isolated from other paragraphs to which it has no relation except that they are parts of a whole. When there is no more to be said on a subject, the paragraph stops, even at the unheard of expense of leaving the rest of the page blank.

Perhaps the best way to characterize the book is to say that it is entirely feminine, recognizing that femininity in intellectual procedures is nothing to be afraid of, may even have an important service to perform in releasing us from the Podsnappery of the intellect.

Men and Steel. By Mary Heaton Vorse. Boni and Liveright.

REPENTANCE

By Daniel Henderson

COME, mad March!
Do you repent
Tempers so incontinent
Vented on each darling bud
That dared to lift through mist and mud
To see you wavering in the hold—
Of spring's warm arms and winter's cold?

Yea, wild month—
It must be so!
For see—the last fierce swirl of snow
That was the symbol of your wrath,
Has melted by the garden path,
And bathes the jonquils' shivering spears
In a very flood of tears!

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FICTION IN DEMAND AT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE IN COOPERATION WITH THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The following lists of books in demand in January in the public libraries in the United States have been compiled from reports made by two hundred representative libraries, in every section of the country and in cities of all sizes down to ten thousand population. The order of choice is as stated by the librarians.

NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND STATES

1.	The Top of the World	*Ethel M. Dell*	PUTNAM
2.	Main Street	*Sinclair Lewis*	HARCOURT
3.	The Age of Innocence	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
4.	Potterism	*Rose Macaulay*	BONI
5.	The Purple Heights	*Marie Conway Oemler*	CENTURY
6.	Harriet and the Piper	*Kathleen Norris*	DOUBLEDAY

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES

1.	The Age of Innocence	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
2.	The Top of the World	*Ethel M. Dell*	PUTNAM
3.	Main Street	*Sinclair Lewis*	HARCOURT
4.	A Poor Wise Man	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	DORAN
5.	Moon-Calf	*Floyd Dell*	KNOPF
6.	The Purple Heights	*Marie Conway Oemler*	CENTURY

NORTH CENTRAL STATES

1.	The Age of Innocence	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
2.	Main Street	*Sinclair Lewis*	HARCOURT
3.	A Poor Wise Man	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	DORAN
4.	This Side of Paradise	*F. Scott Fitzgerald*	SCRIBNER
5.	The Valley of Silent Men	*James Oliver Curwood*	COSMOPOLITAN
6.	The Top of the World	*Ethel M. Dell*	PUTNAM

SOUTH CENTRAL STATES

1.	The Top of the World	*Ethel M. Dell*	PUTNAM
2.	The Age of Innocence	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
3.	This Side of Paradise	*F. Scott Fitzgerald*	SCRIBNER
4.	A Poor Wise Man	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	DORAN
5.	Main Street	*Sinclair Lewis*	HARCOURT
6.	The Valley of Silent Men	*James Oliver Curwood*	COSMOPOLITAN

WESTERN STATES

1.	The Valley of Silent Men	*James Oliver Curwood*	COSMOPOLITAN
2.	The Age of Innocence.	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
3.	A Poor Wise Man	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	DORAN
4.	This Side of Paradise	*F. Scott Fitzgerald*	SCRIBNER
5.	Harriet and the Piper	*Kathleen Norris*	DOUBLEDAY
6.	Main Street	*Sinclair Lewis*	HARCOURT

FOR THE WHOLE UNITED STATES

1.	The Age of Innocence	*Edith Wharton*	APPLETON
2.	The Top of the World	*Ethel M. Dell*	PUTNAM
3.	Main Street	*Sinclair Lewis*	HARCOURT
4.	A Poor Wise Man	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	DORAN
5.	The Valley of Silent Men	*James Oliver Curwood*	COSMOPOLITAN
6.	This Side of Paradise	*F. Scott Fitzgerald*	SCRIBNER

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GENERAL BOOKS IN DEMAND AT PUBLIC LIBRARIES

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE IN COOPERATION WITH THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The titles have been scored by the simple process of giving each a credit of six for each time it appears as first choice, and so down to a score of one for each time it appears in sixth place. The total score for each section and for the whole country determines the order of choice in the table herewith.

NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND STATES

1.	The Outline of History	*H. G. Wells*	MACMILLAN
2.	Margot Asquith: An Autobiography	*Margot Asquith*	DORAN
3.	Roaming Through the West Indies	*Harry A. Franck*	CENTURY
4.	Crowding Memories	*Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich*	HOUGHTON
5.	The Americanization of Edward Bok	*Edward Bok*	SCRIBNER
6.	Memoirs of the Empress Eugénie	*Comte Fleury*	APPLETON

SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES

1.	Margot Asquith: An Autobiography	*Margot Asquith*	DORAN
2.	White Shadows in the South Seas	*Frederick O'Brien*	CENTURY
3.	The Americanization of Edward Bok	*Edward Bok*	SCRIBNER
4.	The Outline of History	*H. G. Wells*	MACMILLAN
5.	Now It Can Be Told	*Philip Gibbs*	HARPER
6.	Memoirs of the Empress Eugénie	*Comte Fleury*	APPLETON

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FOREIGN NOTES AND COMMENT

IT has been reported that Maxim Gorky had broken with the Soviet government of Russia and was on his way to Capri where he intended to live. According, however, to the latest message from Moscow, dated December 20, Gorky has not quarreled with the Soviets any more than they have quarreled with themselves, has not left Russia, and has no thought of doing so.

The "Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant", an altogether respectable Dutch daily, is running James Oliver Curwood's "The Valley of Silent Men" serially as a *feuilleton.* It is entitled in Dutch "Het Stille Dal". A question arises: what idea is Europe forming of us from the American novels that are now being used in this way, novels written by such writers as Upton Sinclair, Nathan Kussy, and James Oliver Curwood?

The Cultural Union of the Chamber of Deputies of Czecho-Slovakia has advised the Nobel Institute of Stockholm that it will be making a serious mistake if it does not confer the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1921, on the Czechish poet Ottokar Brezina or the Czechish novelist Alois Jirasek. By way of intimating who is who in letters in the youthful republic of Czecho-Slovakia, the suggestion is of value. Since the days however of very long ago, the Swedes have been noted for their ability to listen to advice without taking it.

Gyldendal, the largest publishing house in the north and one of the largest in Europe, opened for business in December, 1770. Apropos of their one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, they have issued a bulletin showing what authors hold the record in the north. Of the four best-known Norwegian writers, they have published, in round numbers, 3,000,000 copies of Björnson's books, 2,250,000 of Ibsen's, 2,125,000 of Lie's, and 1,250,000 of Kjelland's. Of Danish writers, Holger Drachmann heads the list with 685,000, Georg Brandes comes second with 541,000, Henrik Pontoppidan third with 313,000, Johannes V. Jensen fourth with 166,000, and Jens Peter Jacobsen fifth with 156,000. Among other writers whose works they have published in numbers exceeding 100,000 are the Danes Hermann Bang, Sven Fleuron, and Gustav Wied, the Norwegians Johan Bojer and Peter Egge, Selma Lagerlöf among the Swedes, and Gunnar Gunnarson of the Icelanders. When we recall that the combined population of Norway and Denmark is a scant 5,000,000 and that the Dano-Norwegian in which Björnson wrote can be understood only in Norway and Denmark, the sale of 3,000,000 copies of his books is highly creditable to Scandinavian intelligence.

The first copies of Knut Hamsun's latest novel, "Konerne ved Vandposten" (The Women at the Well), have arrived in this country. Consisting of 559 pages, it is as big in thought, character drawing, and general contents as in physical size. The women gather day after day around the town pump and editorialize on the happen-

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ings of this quite remarkable world in their quite remarkable way. On page 552 Knut Hamsun says:

Some impatient souls would like to take hold of the running of the universe and reform it all around. They plan a world entirely different from the present one, draw up all manner of programmes, and prepare to eliminate folly root and branch. They do not do it out of a spirit of arrogance, nor do they crow to Heaven. They are rather quite courteous and proceed on their way with prayer. They whisper affectionately to the pages of the song book before them—but somehow or other the music that is really played is not that of any one man.

This is neither a diatribe against orthodoxy nor an espousal of fatalism, but plain, common sense.

When the "Neue Freie Presse" of Vienna invited Hugo von Hofmannsthal to write the article on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Beethoven, it conformed to the happiest traditions of continental journalism. If the author of "Elektra", "Œdipus", "The Death of Titian", and "Venice Delivered" could not appreciate Beethoven in retrospect and transmit his message to the present, no human immortal could. In a brief pamphlet on "The Poet and the Present" written in 1907, Hofmannsthal, born in 1874, said:

The poet spends his days seeking out the harmonies in his soul and trying to coördinate the world within him. He synthesizes the contents of his age.

Of Beethoven he wrote on December 16, 1920:

He entered the world of Mozart and Haydn somewhat as Adam entered between the streams of Paradise. He was the first *homo*. He spoke, not the desecrated words of language, but the living word and the living deed and they became one. What he spoke is not popular and was never meant to be. He had what the people as a whole know not and what many individuals impiously claim: spiritual passion. This he made the seat of music. Strong as a giant, he was as naive as a child. He knew and felt all emotions except doubt. Sorely wounded in that one of his senses through which he became heir to the supersensuous, he resembled Moses who had to talk with God for his people and yet was a stammerer.

Writing under the caption of "William Archer, Creator of the League of Nations", Leon Kellner, professor of English at the University of Czernowitz, says:

Who first conceived of the League of Nations I do not know. That it was not Woodrow Wilson is certain. I dare say some Academy will some day offer a prize for the answer to this question. But I am happy to state that I can inform the world who was the last man to draw up the idea so that it needed only to be adapted to the situation that grew out of the world war. In 1912, Methuen published a slender book of 126 pages at London called "The Great Analysis". Gilbert Murray wrote the preface, the text was published anonymously. Its author was William Archer, the most cosmopolitan journalist in the English language, the publicist and critic who, after a generation of effort, has given the English stage a new tradition and paved the way for Shaw, Galsworthy, Masefield and others. Of the dozens and dozens of books written on the League none gets at the root of the business so admirably or is so discriminating in its argument as William Archer's.

The professor's imagination has served him over-well. Mr. Archer's treatise, though suggestive at every point, hardly does more than show that what the world needs is a "conclave of representative investigators and thinkers brought together, not by election but by selection, from all quarters of the globe". It would then be the business of this *Witenagemot* to take an invoice of the world's good will and ill will, analyze the situation and, by synthesis, offer a way out. The germ of the League is undeniably in the treatise, but it is there more or less as the rock of the cathedral is in the hills.

The millennium will have arrived when a prize can be awarded in literature without raising an argument. Ernest Pérechon has been given the Prix Goncourt for his novel entitled "Nène" and nobody, unless it be

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Pérechon himself, is satisfied. The Paris publishers who rejected the manuscript are piqued at themselves for displaying such poor judgment. The provincial publisher at Sèvres is worried because he cannot fill the orders for "Nène". The London "Athenæum" says, "We suspect that there has been an unconvincing compromise like that by which Senator Harding was chosen to be Republican candidate for the Presidency of America." Diplomatically speaking, this is a reprehensible suspicion. Paris is disgruntled, for with all her literary luminaries, M. Pérechon does not live there; he does not even know the "Street", as the City on the Seine came affectionately to be called by *permissionnaires* of the A. E. F. The heirs of George Sand are out of sorts because the work is said to reflect the atmosphere of her "François le Champi", which was not crowned. The school teachers of France are jealous because they cannot bolster up their pay envelopes with royalties after the fashion of their colleague, the humble Ernest Pérechon. And finally, the critics of France are routed for not having discovered this genius before. "Nène", incidentally, is not his first work. It tells the story of a farmer who, having lost his wife, engaged a preceptress for his children. Egoist that he was, he married again. But his second wife, unable to bear up under the affection the children have for Nène, sees to it that she is discharged. Nène straightway drowns herself. This, garnished as it is with some church history, would have given Edmond de Goncourt eight or ten hours of unaffected delight. And there are dollars, advertisement, and dignity in it for the American publisher who will bring it out in English.

ALLEN WILSON PORTERFIELD

ALLEGIANCE

By Hildegarde Flanner

I HAVE not forgotten yet
Skin that chokes like mignonette,
I who drank myself to death
With the apples of your breath,
I who blasphemously went
Into your beauty's tenement,
I who eagerly confessed
Upon the altar of your breast.

I who falter in the snare
Of your canary-colored hair,
Sacredly could not forget
Skin that chokes like mignonette.

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THE GOSSIP SHOP

Edgar Lee Masters has sailed for Italy. The Gossip Shop listened slyly to his plans as he sat over a cup of coffee. Masters and Robert Frost are the burliest poets. Both might be farmers—both are! Mr. Masters is broad, stocky, and in spite of good shoulders gives you an impression of being largely head and glasses. He talks crisply. He is the business man except when he discusses the American character. There, he goes very deep. Perhaps it is while he is plowing on his farm—for he has bought a farm and escapes from his law practice—that he turns up a skull or two and consults with the hollow bones to learn of the ways of the middle west past and present. Perhaps he will do a Book on the catacombs after he has consulted the skeletons of Rome. At any rate, he told us that he is writing a play, blank verse, for he doesn't believe in rhyme for the stage. Then he told us everything about American poetry. We agreed with him. But it wouldn't be fair to us to tell what he had to say. You see, he's out of the country, but we're still here. "Why can't they find something to write about but ham and eggs?" said Mr. Masters. (Of course, he didn't mean all of "them".) And the Gossip echoed mildly, "Why?"

The Gossip Shop journeyed with Walter Prichard Eaton, that sage of all the Berkshires, to the first night of "The Green Goddess", Mr. William Archer's first attempt at synthetic criticism, in which, as someone has remarked, Mr. Archer has not wholly embraced either of his first loves, turning coldly from Ibsen on the one hand and casting but a flirtatious eye toward "Play Making" on the other.

In the theatre Your Gossip had the pleasure of meeting a number of old friends and of observing at pleasant distances many of those celebrities without whose kind aid first nights would have to be postponed, abandoned, abolished. In the broad highway that skirts the last row of orchestra chairs we came full upon Frank Wilstach who could have stepped into any Belasco production and played the part of a perfectly accoutred Secretary of the Treasury after six P. M. We had converse with him upon the two interests of his life: the maddening scarcity of first editions of Surtees and the merits of the latest similes by the six best simile-makers in America. Then there was Heywood Broun, pleasantly nonchalant and without the least nervousness, apparently, over the chance of Mr. Arliss forgetting his lines.

As we came up from the smoking room, passed us by the Immortal Gymnasts, George Jean Nathan and Alexander Woollcott, all unconscious of the tremors of Times Square and looking as though it were the One Thousand and First Night instead of the very first. That fabulous person whose name we have seen in the public prints so often and so often wondered about, Charlie Knickerbocker, was pointed out to us, much to our delight. He was modishly garbed in a top hat and tuxedo, except — and that greatly

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piqued our curiosity—that his dinner jacket was a sack coat, or so at least it seemed from our distance.

There too we found Robert Welsh of the "Telegram" and each accused the other of not recognizing him, and were introduced to a delightful person named Kelsey Allen, of a famous daily journal known as "Women's Wear", a gentleman so full of the sap of wit that our small corner became quite boisterous with laughter and was reproved for its hilarity. In the crowd we chanced upon Lawrence Rising, whose new novel has drawn such enthusiastic comment from Booth Tarkington, and had the pleasure of bringing him vis-à-vis with Professor William Lyon Phelps who had known Mr. Rising when he was writing his first short stories and plays in California several years ago. And over there, Laurette Taylor in a very lovely evening gown, and here and there many another: Professor Brander Matthews, Dr. Ludwig Lewisohn, Kenneth McGowan, Frank Pope of the "Commercial", S. Jay Kaufman and G. S. Kauffman, the latter of the "Times" staff, Messrs. Benchley, Metcalfe and Towse———. But the list would be too long. Suffice it, a Winthrop Ames first night, and a very gay and interested audience.

And behind it all, strolling along the aforesaid highway during the entire play, William Archer, very modest and alertly attentive and amused by the snatches of comment and conversation. Your Gossip had five minutes' pleasant chat with him, recalling an earlier meeting and remarking upon the happy omen that attended his first play, namely the coincidence of the three *A*'s: Ames, Arliss, and Archer. Three aces indeed.

Jesse Lynch Williams writes the following letter concerning those who write about countries where they have never been. It is apropos of Wallace Irwin's latest novel:

> I always used to assume when chuckling over Wallace Irwin's delicious "Letters of a Japanese Schoolboy" that he had merely caught and caricatured certain superficial Japanisms in order to be amusing, the journalistic trick of a gifted humorist who had no special knowledge of the Japanese character.
>
> Since visiting Japan I have read "Seed of the Sun" and have come to the conclusion that Wallace Irwin knows more about the social customs, physical characteristics, religious practices, family life, business methods, smiling manners and mental processes of the Japanese than most of those Americans who go out to Japan (Mr. Irwin has never been there) and then write serious books on their return about "The Eastern Problem".
>
> "Seed of the Sun", by the way, is a serious book, even though it is a novel and an entertaining one. It deals with the Western Problem, the problem of the Japanese in California, one we all ought to understand. I never understood, before reading this book, even what the problem really was, exactly what the Japanese in California were doing that California had a right to object to, or how they did it. I see the point now. It is an important point, a serious problem. I know now why Californians get so excited about it.
>
> To take a theme of that kind and make a novel of it which is not only interesting but amusing, is a tour de force.

"Zell" is an impressive novel. It will be reviewed later in THE BOOKMAN. We had heard that its author was a young Detroit lawyer. It was a surprise, therefore, when he appeared before the Gossip as a most direct-spoken quiet young American, and announced that he was spending the winter in New York, had just finished a play, and was finishing notes for a new novel. His first novel was "The Groper". Aikman writes English! That's interesting these days. Also, he writes with power—that's interesting, too. We were therefore curious to know how it all started. Apparently a copy of "Tono Bungay", chanced on in a Detroit bookstore, stirred the lawyer to fiction, not so many years

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after his graduation from the University of Michigan. It was the usual hard row.

If there is a more demoniacally, tantalizing, discouraging job than getting started in the short story game (Mr. Aikman writes), I'm glad to have thus far evaded it. The long, expectant waits for mail. The leering postman. The grinning members of one's family. I shall never forget this sample of Fate: I had sent a rather promising manuscript to "The American Magazine"—then, as now, always kindly and hospitable to the beginner. I had had some encouragement from the editor, and I had what I considered some justification for hoping this particular manuscript would land. About a week later, one of my family telephoned my office there was a letter for me at my house. My trembling inquiry elicited the fact that the envelope bore the return address, 481 Fourth Avenue, New York. I recognized this as the address of the Crowell Publishing Company, the publishers of "The American Magazine". And the envelope, I learned, was not one of the customary long and bulky ones, returning my burnt offerings. At last! Glowing with the proud realization that I had finally battered my way into a first-class magazine, I hurried home at once—in the middle of the afternoon. Yes, the envelope was there. I opened it, and discovered a printed announcement from "The Woman's Home Companion"—also a Crowell publication—of a prize competition in embroidery! How it came to be sent to me—a male citizen—I have never puzzled out.

The first number of a new poetry magazine appears this month. It is "The Measure", edited by nine young poets among whom are Louise Townsend Nicholl, David Morton, Genevieve Taggard, George O'Neil, and Maxwell Anderson. If we were assured that they would publish *only* their own poetry, we could bet on its success. However, they announce:

A new poetry journal is obviously an attempt to start something—to demolish no-trespassing signs and encourage younger poets. It might be also, as THE MEASURE is, an attempt to escape from cults, both radical and conservative, and function with a minimum of prejudice. Good stuff, the stuff that convinces and endures, is what we are after.

Not long ago Harry Hansen, the erudite gentleman who conducts the book page of the Chicago "Daily News", addressed the Mediævalists at the Chicago University Club. After he had read from Carl Sandburg, J. V. A. Weaver, and others, the local literati broke into the usual violent discussion of "new" poetry. Haven't they progressed beyond this in Chicago?

The list of poems chosen by THE BOOKMAN from the December magazines as the most notable of the month is: "The Great Seducer" by Cale Young Rice (Century); "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things" by Robert Frost (Harper's); "Matter" by Louis Untermeyer (Century); "Against Treason" by John Drinkwater (Nation, December 29); "The Boy Dreams", translation from Rainer Maria Rilke by Ludwig Lewisohn (Nation, December 1); "Dead Man's Wood" by Osbert Sitwell (Poetry); "A Grave Song" by Amy Lowell and "Assault" by Edna St. Vincent Millay (New Republic, December 29); "Miss Kate-Marie" by Elizabeth Madox Roberts (Atlantic Monthly); "Sea-Change" by Maxwell Anderson (New Republic, December 8).

In the final choice of "The Poems of the Month", the critic is at liberty to add such poems as he may choose from his personal observations of the magazine verse.

"What a terrible woman!"

The Gossip and the author of "Main Street" had just blown into a downtown club house from a whirlwind dash down Fifth Avenue. If there is one person in the world who walks faster than Your Gossip, it is Sinclair Lewis. Also, he has red hair. Also, he is tall and thin. Also, he speaks rapidly, and has a nervous way of using his hands. To return to the woman. Mr. Lewis found her typical

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of "Main Street". She was, nevertheless, completely of New York City. She was square, tailored, and of an ageless age. She had a square jaw, and determined lips. She represented —well, don't quite dare say what she represented.

"We don't have to meet her!" said Mr. Lewis. Then we launched into a discussion of the new novel. It's to be for the city, what "Main Street" was for the small town. It will not be New York, nor Chicago, nor Minneapolis, nor San Francisco—just the Gopher Prairie of American cities. Will it have its Carol Kennicott? We don't know; but we guess that the lady planted in front of her club bulletin board will be found in its pages.

Overheard in the Cosmos Club in Washington.

Mr. Hoover to Frank Simonds: "What are you so hard at work upon?"

Mr. Simonds: "I'm writing a book on the Peace Conference."

Mr. Hoover: "But everyone else has done that."

Mr. Simonds: "I know, but that's why this one of mine is necessary. You see, I shall call it 'From Utopia to Bedlam'."

Fred Lockley, from Oregon, writes the Gossip Shop a fascinating account of pioneer literary days in the far west, of the state's first author, Abigail Scott Duniway, and of Harvey Scott.

"Recently I visited Cottage Grove", he says, "and talked to Opal Whiteley's grandmother, her sister, her teacher, her roommate at the State University, and many former childhood friends and former associates."

This burns the Gossip with curiosity. We are hastening to secure the interview for THE BOOKMAN.

Sherwood Anderson writes from Palos Park, Illinois, that he is "cleaning up a bunch of short stories" and has a novel under way. Between times he says that he paints. "Often I have half a notion", he says, "to chuck writing and do nothing but splash around in gaudy colors." Apparently he splashes, for Gene Markey writes us that the exhibition of paintings now hanging in the Arts Club can be interpreted by no one (including Mr. Anderson): "one of 'em looked like the interior of a rhinoceros's throat infected with tonsilitis. Another, Burton Rascoe claims, is decidedly phallic. But, funny as they are, Sherwood has sold two of them at two hundred dollares apiece. Incidentally, though not admittedly the result of the sale of these paintings, he sails for Paris in May." One would have thought he'd have set out for the South Seas after receiving such a fascinating blob of romance as the following letter sent us by Anderson. It's from "Jerry" Blum, who is painting in the tropical isles, and is dated "somewhere in October", from "the District of Hitia, Papeete". Unfortunately, perhaps, expurgations of the most delightful bits had to be made. Unfortunately, too, the Gossip Shop stenographer resigned after copying the unexpurgated version.

It's raining and when it rains here in Hitia it does so with a vengeance on old corrugated iron roofs under which we happen to live just now—ain't worth a damn—all day long. I keep moving the things to dry spots. We were invited to dinner to the main citizen of Hitia last night. The John D of the Place. Had forks and knives and plates and good grub—we literally swam to his house. A little river runs along the front of his house and a cocoanut tree flung across is the path. Not being acrobats we had trouble but we arrived—he was very grave. I smiled and asked him to pardon my not having any pants—I just wear a loin cloth these days. That's one wonderful thing about being down here, you can walk around almost nude and let your body have a

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great time— Well what do you think! that S. S. Island Crœsus put on his pants just to receive me—me like a nut comes without mine— Well we forgave one another and everybody ate an awful lot—It was not as good as other native parties I have been to where everybody eats with their fingers—that's great—and I want to tell you it's some trick eating "miti", a sauce like soup, with one's fingers and not throwing it all around in a disorderly manner like well brought up and really cultivated S. S. Islanders do. There is nothing more embarrassing than when eating this sauce, and you realize that instead of it all landing easily or rather being sucked in deftly a little stream of it goes down between your breasts.

They won't hurry—their whole scheme of life is on the other side of the sphere. The idea and power of money even today means nothing to them and they don't understand it. One day at a place in the country they charged what would be equivalent to $1.50 for 3 people —a little while later for one person they charge the same thing. When you ask how much is the bill they ask someone else that might be standing near how to charge you—they say, and that is what you pay. At one place the meals and stay for the night was $2, but a carriage ride in an old broken down buggy with an old rope for the reins they ask 150 frcs for (in times of peace $30, now $10). I thought, I couldn't live here, because to get around to paint I wanted a carriage. So I wanted to see how much it would be by the month, using it every day—they figured up and said it would be 65 frcs a month—about $4—that was my first lesson. They have no sense of exactitude, only relativity. A mother doesn't know how old her kid of two years is —she just don't know. Dates mean nothing to them. Nor time nor place.

Says the San Francisco "Bulletin":

Three booklovers sat discussing the magazines. What was the most notable piece of writing they had seen in a periodical during the past decade? Curiously enough all three mentioned "Sir Thomas Browne" by Raymond M. Weaver in THE BOOKMAN for October, 1918. Then they took to reading the article aloud and at the turn of each paragraph there was the comment, "That's the real thing"—or words to that effect. "It should be printed in letters of gold," said one enthusiast, and again there was agreement. "Who is Raymond M. Weaver?" someone asked, and there was none to answer.

Your Gossip proudly replies. He is a young professor of English at Columbia University, New York. His room in one of the dormitories is lined with books on poetry and Japan, the walls are covered with Japanese prints and his own paintings, and the chairs are usually occupied by students seeking advice on subjects widely separated from the literary. He is working now on his introduction to the works of Herman Melville. He is as violently opposed to the "new" poetry as he is enthusiastic about the Captain's fascinating romances of the South Seas. In the midst of academic distractions, he finds time to do an occasional criticism for THE BOOKMAN.

The dressing rooms of the Cohan theatre in New York are not large. When Arnold Daly, his enthusiastic dog, Your Gossip, and the letters of congratulation on the actor's performance in "The Tavern" were included in the furnishings, there was little place for literary discussion. However, as Daly drew himself rapidly into leatherstocking we talked of American drama, such as it is, and of the plans for Daly's new plays. It was only by accident that we heard later of his book. "The Dominant Male" is an unusual performance for an actor. It is not only reminiscences of authors and of others; but there are plays and essays, and caustic comments on life and art.

Two new poetry anthologies will soon be upon us. Marguerite Wilkinson is editing her "New Voices", and a new edition will be published, while Mrs. Waldo Richards, who gives her "Poetry, Play and Story Readings" again this year, has just published another anthology called "Star Points".

No one in the country, probably, has followed literary tendencies more closely than Robert Davis, former editor of "Munsey's Magazine". Now

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that he's turned literary agent he's keeping his nose even more keenly to the scent. "Mark me", said he to the Gossip Shop the other day, "you're going to see a new thing happening in fiction. We're going to have a series of highly romantic novels, filled with the trappings of luxury; but told with the utmost frankness! And, which is more important, they are going to be written by *women*. Some day across your desk will float the big novel of the age, and it will be written by a woman, and an educated woman, probably of the highest social class. In the next few years women in America are going to lead the men on such an intellectual chase that the male sex will be gasping for breath. We'll have another Sappho, and, what's more important, with the increased independence of woman, she's going to sit down to write the truth about herself frankly. It's never really been done, and, believe me, it will be interesting reading." We wonder if Mr. Davis has the great novel up his sleeve. At any rate, we'll keep our eyes open to the procession of book jackets dancing across the well-filled back of the Gossip Shop desk.

"Whenever I make enough money practising law", said William Alexander Percy to the Gossip Shop, "I come up to New York for music and the libraries." Mr. Percy is so completely of the south, so disarming socially, that it's really hard to remember that some people consider him the most accomplished of our American lyricists. The Gossip Shop doesn't go quite so far as that, though it admires "In April Once" very greatly. We caught Mr. Percy on his way to a César Franck concert, and he told us fascinating tales of negro minstrelsy, of the melodies no one has yet succeeded in translating to modern music, of wild jamborees in the cotton fields. It was like a quiet walk through a summer evening, this talk with the gentle southern poet.

H. D. (Mrs. Richard Aldington), and W. Bryher, the author of "Development", are spending the winter in California. They write enthusiastic letters of the California climate. Mrs. Aldington has been doing a series of Greek "impressions". They reflect the warmth and color of the coast. Apparently America is almost a relief after foggy London. Miss Bryher writes:

> It is a wonderful experience to visit America for the first time. I have been waiting for several years to cross. It is such a relief to be out of Europe and the incessant memories of the war; there is much more interest in books and literature in this country and so much more chance for development.

That last is interesting. I'm afraid we can't generalize from that opinion; but wouldn't it be nice if we could!

The publication of Robert Lansing's book on the Peace Conference is one of the most important of spring announcements. It recalls tales the Gossip Shop has heard of that statesman's propensities at Paris for drawing. It seems that no matter how serious the moment in the council room, Mr. Lansing had his pad before him, and with a facile pencil sketched humorous portraits of the great men around him. Apparently it was his method of concentrating. No detail of the discussion escaped him meanwhile. We wonder if Mr. Lansing has illustrated his own book. Probably not. However, for a real souvenir of the Peace Conference, what could be better than one of R. Lansing's originals of Lloyd George?

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George Douglas of the San Francisco "Bulletin", the only man in the country who writes a metropolitan daily's editorials with one hand and a whole book page with the other, made a good editorial out of that azure whiff of "Christmas Tobacco" that Kit Morley fabricated. It was a good editorial and a happy portent. If other editors would let their editorial hand know what their literary hand is doing, it would be good!—and they might get mentioned in Bob Holliday's next book about "Men and Books and Cities". Yes, this is the same George Douglas that Holliday told all about in "Murray Hill's Travels"—calling him erudite, polished, subtle, and lots of things like that. They call him "G. D." out in San Francisco.

Ray Crabtree writes from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, of a new idea in book reviewing—it might be called, "A Book a Week in the Pulpit":

"7.30 P. M. Informal Service of worship with lecture based on Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers's 'Three Lords of Destiny'." So ran the announcement of the Sunday night service in St. John's Episcopal Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The writer attended the service and listened to a very interesting, entertaining, and helpful lecture. Incidentally he noticed that the rector, Dr. A. L. Murray, had solved the problem of getting a Sunday night congregation. The rector announced that the following Sunday night "Everyday Americans" by Professor Canby would be discussed.

Cedar Rapids has Sunday movies and some of the churches have large young people's societies that meet just before the night service. Some of these churches have very fine choirs and offer attractive musical programs to the night congregation. Yet Dr. Murray has gradually built up a Sunday night constituency, drawn from all classes of people.

The librarian of the public library told me that after the Saturday papers announce the title of the book to be discussed at St. John's, a demand for the book is generally made. One Saturday night five persons asked for the book announced. In conversation with Dr. Murray I learned that he has been reviewing books for several years and has had some newspaper training. But not until two years ago did he conceive the idea of book-review lectures. He has presented to his night congregations books on personality, character, success, history, theology, philosophy, psychology, and current problems. "People", he said "like all kinds of books. I think, however, the largest congregation I had was on the night I discussed Chancellor Day's 'My Neighbor, The Working Man'."

C. Kay Scott, whose realistic novel "Blind Mice" settles the character of Mother-in-Law forever, made a confession to the Gossip Shop not long ago. Scott has traveled over the world and back again, he is middle-aged, slow-speaking, middle-western, the drawling American. This is his first novel; but there have been long years of apprenticeship. Joseph Hergesheimer, we are told, burned his first sheef of manuscripts. That's true—at least we talked to a man who says that he was present when the pages were carefully placed on an open grate midst murmuring of incantations, and promises of "no carbon copies". Not so Mr. Scott—he couldn't afford it. Until he was satisfied with his product, he published under a pseudonym. Since he refuses to divulge the tag for his crimes, we're quite helpless. Who knows; perhaps he, too, should have burned his bridges.

From Boston! A prominent and entertaining literary lady writes the Shop:

I do not believe in literary sectionalism; but I do believe in noting with sympathy the larger groups of literary workers outside New York who are characteristic of the place as well as of the time they live in. We have among us some of the best poets,—as well as some of the best advertised ones; we have some of the best novelists,—as well as best sellers. We have the most widely distributed "juveniles" and also some of the librarian's favorites. We have one of the classic humoristic essayists, and two prize playwrights. New England is still on the map!

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